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When the Dead Walk

KD 13087

Mrs Frank A. W. Abrams

55 Emerson St

East Weymouth, Mass.

To —

Mr. Charles Wardwell

with compliments and

best wishes of the

authoress —

Lavinia Walsh

WHEN THE DEAD WALK

A Novel

BY

LAVINIA WALSH

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1902

MUTUAL PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

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WHEN THE DEAD WALK.

CHAPTER I.

LE NATIONAL.

PERHAPS no city in the universe, barring the "Monster London," may boast of more epicurean grandeur in the form of fashionable clubs, than may Paris, with its dazzling array of nobles and celebrities. Nearly every profession and calling is represented by some magnificent abode of recreation, some palatial retreat, wherein each member, like a modern Crœsus, basks in the rays of that fair but fickle creature, Copia, and swears allegiance to the fascinating but intemperate son of Jupiter. The soldier, the actor, the partisan, the scholar, each has his separate domain, and there, untrammeled by home cares or party conquests, he may join in conversations redolent of wit and learning, and partake of feasts which outrival in their excellency that of the famous Chaldean monarch.

A club that may claim nobility among its

members invariably holds a certain fascination for all nationalities, for all classes. We have, it is true, clubhouses quite as superb in construction and appointments as those of our aristocratic neighbors, but the cosmopolitan character of the members is apt—O thou frail thing called Human Nature—to detract in a marked degree from the feeling of respect—nay, confess it, awe—with which we poor mortals would regard them did their frequenters possess, in conjunction with their wealth and talents, that small, but nowadays all-important accessory—title.

Among the leading members of one of our New York clubs, we read the names of Mr. X——, who won fame in the literary field; Mr. Y——, noted for his musical talent; Mr. Z——, the overflowing state of whose coffers leaves no room for queries as to who he is, and why he came there; the Honorable Mr. So and So, and there you are!

Enter a Parisian or London club accompanied by some friend well acquainted with the aristocracy: That gentleman with the Napoleonic mien is Monsieur le Marquis d'A——, noted for—well, for nothing in particular, excepting, perhaps, his vast estates and his renowned ancestry; and here we must discreetly close our eyes to that self-evident truth so cleverly expounded by Sir Thomas Overbury when he

observed that a man who had not anything to boast of but his illustrious ancestors, was like a potato, the only good belonging to him being under ground; the tall, slim creature with the Chesterfieldian air and the monocle, is my Lord So and So; the portly, good-natured personage nearby is his grace le Duc de B——, accounted the best judge of wine and horse-flesh in the country, son of the late renowned somebody and nephew to a baron; the Prince of G——is the center of that little group to the left; and so on until our splendor-loving eyes are blinded, and our cosmopolitan views melted by the awful glare of nobility, and we find ourselves hovering upon the brink of that abyss wherein the souls of the covetous lie wallowing.

Confess, does not some occult feeling of satisfaction exist at the thought of associating with titled nonentity? Ay, for in such a mould is the human mind constructed that aught pertaining to majesty develops in our fickle natures characteristics hitherto latent, which take precedence of our more humble personality, and cause even the most democratic amongst us to bow before the head that wears a coronet and the hand that wields a sceptre.

As some one has remarked, we are but ambitious children of an aristocratic mother—true representatives of our ambitious proto-

types. We long for that which in our eyes seems the acme of felicity, but like Bonnivard of old, we but scale the wall to gaze upon the unattainable, and must, perforce, fall back amidst the "charnel chains" of untitled mediocrity, and submit to their thraldom, until our social torments, as did those physical ones of the fiends of Milton, assume the character of our elements.

Situated upon that part of the Avenue de l'Opéra which overlooks the Rue St. Honoré, that gayest of Parisian thoroughfares, is the National Clubhouse, a magnificent edifice built in the old Doric style of architecture, with a frieze reproduced from that of the ancient Parthenon.

Grand, massive and imposing without, luxurious and spacious within, it is a fitting rendezvous for the learned notables who congregate within its walls. A colossal figure of the war goddess guards the spacious entrance portico, and smiles calmly down into the faces of the well known celebrities who enter there;—artists, savants, promoters of the Fine Arts, scientific and literary scholars, and even ecclesiastic worthies, may be met and hob-o-nobbed with at Le National.

Upon a day in September, in the year 18—, the wine room of this illustrious clubhouse presented a scene of unbounded merriment

and dissipation; a scene often to be met with in places of recreation frequented by the wealthy and care-free of Paris. A party of young revelers of the fashionable set, youths for whom the bright skin of the spotted Leopard of Dante held an irresistible fascination, had gathered there with, to all appearance, but a single object paramount:—that of paying unlimited homage to the insatiate and bewitchingly dangerous goddess of worldly pleasures; youths whose dress, manner and benign indifference to that unassuming commodity—gold—stamped them with the dignified appellation of "well-bred-men-about-town," an appellation, by the way, of such unparalleled prestige and manliness in the eyes of the Parisian youth that to be honored with its endowment means several steps forward in his social career.

The leader of the party, a tall, handsome fellow in the uniform of a lieutenant of Chasseurs, having drained half a dozen glasses of blue-sealed Johannesburg, and upset a seventh in his endeavors to carry it to his lips, tilted his chair back until there was imminent danger of his well shaped head being dashed upon the Veneziano mosaic of the floor, and observed apropos of a subject previously introduced by some incapacitated youth at the opposite end of the board:

"Why the deuce doesn't Madame introduce

her somewhere? Does she think we are all waiting for a chance to kidnap the girl?"

"Perhaps she is going to make a votaress of her for a cell in Notre Dame; Madame's views are ultra-religious at times, you know," replied a stout but aristocratic-looking youth whose ultimate aim in life appeared to be the successful demolition of a nicely dressed fowl and a well iced bottle.

"I notice Paget has a leaning in that direction."

"Faugh! I would't give a louis for his chances with the girl. Mon petit Paul will be the favored one there, if he is not already."

At this remark all eyes were turned upon a young man at the foot of the board, who, apparently unconscious of any reference to himself, continued to talk and laugh in an undertone with his neighbor.

"Come now, Bourrienne, confess! Has not little Julie evinced a marked preference for your worthy self of late? Reticence is as bad for the mind, you know, as confession is good for the soul."

Here a dignified youth in the garb of a Stanislas student ventured to interpose; a youth whom the imbibing of a rather ominous mixture of '48 claret and amber-colored Madeira had inspired with the belief that his views upon the subject should be voiced.

"I have noticed no preference for Bourrienne," he said pompously.

"You're blind then, Fontanes, or perhaps you also have designs in that direction and will see no rival successful. As the sage says, —'There are none so blind as those who will not see.'"

At this the Stanislas student immediately bridled up, and boisterously declared his innocence. To be sure he was an admirer of the fair sex, but only when two, or three, or even five or six, were concerned. Did anyone for a moment think that he, Emile Fontanes, was so lacking in common sense as to become so enamored of one woman as to be jealous of her? No indeed! He left such fascinating diversion for men less experienced in worldly ways than he; but to return to the point at issue, what reasons had they for supposing that she favored Bourrienne above all others?

"She gave him three waltzes at a tame little affair down at Madame Duracq's, and that is a sign that was never known to fail." Did not Bourrienne agree with him?

The latter laughed rather uneasily, and with the ostensible purpose of changing the subject, proposed a toast to one Mlle. Lannes, a singer of some note, who was to appear at L'Opéra Comique that evening.

"Come, come, Bourrienne! This will never

do. Of course we must make all due allowance for your modesty; at the same time you cannot blind our eyes to certain facts. We are all aware that, with the form of an Apollo and the invulnerable heart of an Adonis,you are creating havoc amidst fair femininity. Why, even La Lannes, they say, fell a victim to 'Mon petit Paul's' fascinations last year in London; although I cannot vouch for that fact. Perhaps you can verify the report, St. John."

"The Mlle.'s affairs are not mine," replied the person addressed, a young Englishman whose mien and apparel proclaimed him an adherent of the histrionic art, "but pray who is the fascinating creature over whom you see fit to make such a deucedly unpleasant fuss?"

"For an actor, St. John, you are sadly behind the times. She is a niece, and ward I believe, of old Louis Carbonnet, a superannuated but wealthy old devotee of fashion, and as much adored for her money as for her pretty face. If you wish to see her, watch the second box in the first tier to-night. Monsieur believes in being *en évidence* at L'Opéra Comique, but is contented with a very inconspicuous position at La Theatre du Châtelet."

This sally provoked a chorus of laughs from his companions, all of whom seemed to be familiar with Monsieur's failings.

"Now really," lisped an effeminate little fellow whose painfully high collar seemed indicative of slow strangulation, "do you mean to say that you have never seen Julie Carbonnet? My mother has known Madame, her aunt, for years."

"Never, my dear boy, I still hold that treat in anticipation."

"By the way, St. John," remarked the student addressed as Fontanes, "why don't you go in and win? You're a pretty, sleek-looking fellow, and stand a far better show of success than we poor devils, in that you may impose upon the young lady's sympathies in the guise of some wounded knight, or a gallant rescuer of some unfortunate fair one. By Jove, De Riviere, I'll wager ten to one that if St. John here thought it worth his very valuable time to compete for the prize, he would take Carbonnet House by storm."

"Chance for a wager!" "Chance for a wager!" was echoed on all sides.

The face of Paul de Bourrienne had become strangely white during this conversation, but he ventured no word, and his attention seemed to be riveted upon his plate. He was a big, handsome fellow with massive shoulders and a splendid head, the latter displaying in a marked degree the well known characteristics of the Saxon rather than the swarthy, wiry traits of

the Frenchman. The features were strong and clearly cut; no beard or mustache disfigured the firm, well shaped mouth and chin; the eyes, shaded like a girl's by long, dark, curling lashes, were gray and penetrating in their glance; the physique was faultless—his five feet ten proving the sarcastic nature of the sobriquet of "Petit Paul."

"Come, De Riviere, will you take him up?" asked the stout youth who always displayed eagerness when betting was in progress.

"Willingly, in view of the fact that I believe the girl to be invulnerable to all save Bourrienne here, with all due apologies to you, of course, St. John; a wager is a wager at the best of times, and we must set personal feelings aside, you know. Will you enter into the sport, old man, that is, if Fontanes is in earnest?"

Most certainly that gentleman was in earnest. It would furnish them with a little harmless amusement, as well as providing an agreeable pastime for St. John.

"And pray what is my share in this very interesting wager?" asked the actor.

"To the victor belong the spoils. The trophies of war will fall to your share, for there is not a doubt but what I win. Come, we will drink to little Julie, and success to my cause."

"In all reason I cannot join you," observed De Riviere, "but when you have finished your toast I will propose another. Now, St. John, you first, what shall it be?"

"Your wager has placed me in a rather delicate position, gentlemen; that of an egotist, I should say; but for the sake of good fellowship I will enter into the game, and being partial to neither contestant, will lay siege to this fair creature's heart; but mind, Fontanes, I warn you that as a result of my endeavors you may be bemoaning, together with the worthy Shylock, the loss of your very valuable ducats. —Well, here goes! This to the first kiss I press upon the lips of the adored one—"

Scarcely had the words been uttered than the glass was dashed from his hand and the contents spattered over the bright uniform of a subaltern.

"Are you men!" With blazing eyes Bourrienne looked around upon the faces of his companions. "Has your conversation been that of men? No! rather of cowards! Ah bah! put up your sword, De Riviere, you have disgraced the uniform you wear; and as for you, sir," turning upon the enraged actor, "I know you but slightly, nor do I care to know you better; but the lady to whom that cowardly toast was offered is a friend whom I value highly, and even were she not a friend

or an acquaintance, I should deem it my duty to avenge such an insult to womankind."

Madame de Bourrienne had been an English woman, and in young Bourrienne's veins was mingled the blood of two great opposing forces; the electric flow of the Goth was adulterated with the more sluggish current of the Saxon, and with the face and physique of a Briton, Paul de Bourrienne possessed the fiery nature of the Gascon.

"D—ble aristocrat!" came through the clinched teeth of the actor, as with face white with anger he returned the scornful gaze of his assailant.

"Bourrienne has taken too much!" "Easy there, St. John, you must make allowances, you know!" came from all sides as the most sober of the party jumped to their feet in order to intercept what seemed likely to end in a serious affair.

"I listened to your harmless banter, for as such I considered it while my name alone was concerned; but when persons calling themselves gentlemen so far forget what is due to the title, as to discuss ladies' characteristics and preferences at the club, it is time that someone interfered. You have disgraced your professions and callings, and have brought dishonor upon the names you bear."

An embarrassing silence followed his words;

then the actor, leaning across the table toward Bourrienne in an attitude of menace, replied:

"Except among hot-headed Frenchmen, the days of duelling are past, my young man; I shall not call you out and avenge with blood the insult you have offered me; neither do I care to command honorable satisfaction for your insolence by other violent means, for despite your assertion to the contrary, I am a gentleman. But mark me, no Englishman was ever known to suffer an indignity such as I have received at your hands, to pass with impunity. Go your way, Bourrienne, happy in the belief that you have avenged some fancied insult, but remember—I abide my time, and all things come to the man who waits."

"I do not care to bandy words with a man of your calibre, but there is my card—I am at your service," and bowing coldly to the assembled company, Bourrienne left the club.

"Such is social life," he mused as he walked unsteadily to la Rue St. Honoré and hailed a passing cab. "Gentleman, indeed! Ay, as they go in the catalogue, he is a gentleman. Cowardly mountebank! the world would be well rid of such monsters as he, but God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man."

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF CARBONNET.

THE afternoon sun cast oblique shadows along la Rue St. Denis, lighting as with a thousand gas-flames the western windows of the Carbonnet home, and bathing in a crimson radiance the little group ensconced beneath the wisteria vines that overhung the brown-and-white striped awnings of the house porch. Madame Carbonnet, very warm and very red, was busily engaged in perusing the social columns of *Le Journal*, her stout figure, despite the lateness of the hour and her supposed dereliction of provincialism, arrayed in a loosely flowing house-gown of white and scarlet; beside her, his small, tapering feet, encased in faultless patent-leathers, resting daintily upon the veranda railing, sat Monsieur, cool and unruffled, meek and unassuming, and endeavoring in his contented way to find something of interest in the one-page supplement of the journal—the only part with which, by the way, Madame saw fit to part. Between them upon the veranda floor lay Sebastopol, the dog —Madame doted upon foreign names—a fat,

surly pug, whose well kept hide lay in heavy folds upon the back of his bull-like neck, and whose eyes, large and brown, but unintelligent, seemed to project upon sticks from the smutty, wrinkled little face. This was Madame's pet, and it is presumed that the unlovely brute received far more attention in the way of favors and polite consideration than did the meek little gentleman opposite, whose every lineament, from the neatly parted wig to the dainty foot gear, seemed to bespeak household oppression, tyranny and martyrdom. It needed but a glance to learn who was master in the home of the Carbonnets. Madame's broad, florid face, with its square jaw, jetty brows, and stern, almost masculine features, denoted unlimited will-power, stability of purpose, and a wide scope of selfish ambition; while the wizened, insipid physiognomy of her worthy spouse betrayed an unlaudable combination of petty weaknesses and uncomplaining submission.

Monsieur's fortune and prospects had been decidedly upon the wane until good judgment led him to offer his hand, and presumably his heart, to the eldest daughter of old Henri Deschamps, a prosperous man as the saying goes; thereupon old Henri, dazzled by the glare and glitter of aristocracy—for in Monsieur's veins flowed some of the reddest blood

in France—opened up his heart and incidentally his coffers, both of which had hitherto been closed and double-barred against the world, and the no-longer youthful scion of the Carbonnets, then all but on his last legs, profited accordingly. Consequently, Madame felt her position, and as Napoleon of finance she must needs be a Napoleon of despotic sway.

The afternoon breeze rustled gently through the wisteria vines, lifting the few unpasted hairs of Monsieur's wig, and playing familiarly with a coquettish lock upon Madame's forehead. An enterprising fly alighted upon Sebastopol's nose, and began to take unpardonable liberties with that gentleman's whiskers. He snapped viciously at the air for a moment, then rested his jaw once more upon his paws, and continued his reveries. Of what those reveries consisted was best known to Sebastopol himself, but a covert glance from one to the other of his companions, and an occasional slow wagging of his tightly curled tail, said as plainly as words: "These two have been quarreling. My beloved mistress has been scolding this aggressive individual, this man of Spartan sinew, this——"

A hurdy-gurdy rattled along the stony pavement and drew up before the door. Madame laid aside the journal and rested her head upon the cushioned chair-back. Mon-

sieur thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and beat time with his long, carefully manicured fingers upon his chest. Sebastopol lay still and listened, his hairy breast expanding with patriotic fervor at the stirring notes of the Marseillaise. A fawning Italian stumbled over a board at the gate, upon which "PAINT" stood out in glaring letters—for the Carbonnet house was undergoing repairs—and shambled up the walk, hat in hand. As a matter of custom, the battered chapeau with its capacious head part was extended pleadingly toward the gentleman of the group. Monsieur hastily thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and after a rather protracted and aimless search, brought forth a variety of articles, among which were conspicuous a pocket corkscrew and a night-key, the latter still bright and unscratched from want of use. With a scornful uplifting of her heavy brows, Madame elevated her voluminous skirts, and from a fat pocket in her petticoat extricated a centime, The swarthy mendicant bowed cringingly and resumed his place beside his fellow-traveller. Two more tunes were rattled off—the estimated worth of a centime —and then with a smiling good-bye in broken French, the pair rumbled away.

Monsieur resumed his reading; he had found a description of a hurdle race at

Auteuil. Madame began to direct a rather unintelligible shower of baby talk upon the drowsy canine.

At this juncture a cab turned the corner of the adjoining boulevard and drew up at the house. Monsieur lowered his feet from the railing, and Madame arranged her skirts a trifle more gracefully about her.

A large-headed cane was thrust through the cab door, followed immediately by a silk hat; then came the fashionably arrayed form of young Bourrienne. A rather desperate but unsteady effort to pass the paint sign without contamination, resulted in a disfiguring smear of white from one of the posts upon the skirts of his coat; then with the courtly bow of his race, he presented himself before Madame Carbonnet, bending and touching his lips to the heavily ringed hands as they were extended to greet him.

"Ah, 'mon petit Paul,' I feared you had forsaken us."

"My dear Madame, it is but ten days—you see I have counted them—since I was last here, and although the interim has seemed ages to me, I dare not venture to hope that you have considered it long."

"Tut! Tut! a truce to such modesty! What unassuming creatures we men are." But would he be seated and tell them the

latest doings of the smart set? The heat had kept her a prisoner for the last week or so, and Carbonnet there had been no further than the street corner since Friday last. Bourrienne smiled as he shook Monsieur's hand. He thought he understood. The latter drew a chair forward, thereby eliciting a yelp of anger from Sebastopol, the tip of whose tail he had jeopardized, and a terrified shriek from Madame, whose fears were ever on the alert for his canineship.

Bourrienne seated himself, and in response to Madame's plea for news, proceeded to relate the doings of socialdom:—To be sure, it was awfully dull owing to the unprecedented heat for that time of year, and the drawing near of the season's close. Madame Douché had been dabbling upon the Bourse again, and had lost of course; the papers had not gotten it though; Delaborde while scouring the Quartier Latin for a model for his Terpsichore, had discovered not only a muse, but a Venus de Medici, a syren, and a *Danseuse*, all combined, and had put her on at the Casino for a run of one hundred nights. Paris had gone wild, he assured her. Defeu had rented his establishment on la Place Vendôme, and had gone to Parhelion for a three months' fishing sojourn. La Davoust was suing upon the grounds of desertion, and the case prom-

ised to be one of the most sensational of the season. And so he rattled on—Madame listening with almost breathless eagerness to his words. She was in her native element when her neighbors' frailties were being hashed up in the serving.

"And Blanche Lannes?" ventured Monsieur. "You are going to-night, of course, Bourrienne?"

Yes, he would be there. Indeed, who would miss the closing event of the season? He had heard her sing in London the year before. She was indeed lovely; and her marvellous vocal powers had been in no wise exaggerated.

A pause ensued, during which Bourrienne balanced his cane upon the toe of his boot, and Monsieur studied the workmanship upon the cornice of the brick block opposite. At length the former looked up. Was that the *Journal* monsieur had? If he would turn to the third page, fourth column, he would find a detailed account of the day at the Bois de Boulogne.

Monsieur fumbled through the paper, but did not succeed in finding what he sought. This necessitated Bourrienne's arising and helping in the search. For a few moments the two heads were hidden behind the sheet, both engaged in an industrious search—not so

industrious, however, but what Bourrienne could spare the time to slip something with a conspicuous label into Monsieur's hand, and Monsieur to scribble the words—"Rose garden—back," upon the margin of the paper. Ah, there it was to be sure. How stupid of him not to be able to find it without "mon petit Paul's" assistance—RACES AT THE BOIS.—He might have known that that was the page.

Bourrienne resumed his seat at Madame's side. She was carefully arranging the orange-colored bow upon Sebastopol's neck and did not look up.

"Your father, Paul," she said in the musical voice that Madame could assume at times, "is he better? Have you heard from Pierrepont lately?"

A shade passed over the boyish face of young Bourrienne, and a sad look crept into his eyes. "Poor old dad," he murmured. "Yes, Madame, I have heard. He is no better."

"For shame, lad! you should go to him," replied Madame affectedly. She liked to assume a motherly rôle toward this lad who was so rapidly travelling the downward path of youth.

Ay, Madame was right; he should go on Saturday—Saturday without fail. He longed

to make it sooner, but had reckoned and found it all but impossible. There was the opera that evening; the races at Longchamps on the morrow, and the concert at la Cirque d'Été at night; so much for Tuesday; then he was booked for the yacht race on Wednesday—cup day, too, he couldn't miss that—and the ball at the Hôtel Mars the same evening; and he had promised Duroc he would take in the steeplechase at Auteuil on Thursday; then for fear he should not have an opportunity to call and see Madame again, he had saved out one more day of grace—that brought him to Saturday.

A rather pronounced titter, subsequently smothered in a cough from the region of Monsieur's paper, and greeted by a covert kick from the young gallant, caused Madame to stare sternly across at the now deeply absorbed reader.

Bourrienne arose; he would leave them, but would call again before the week was over; and with a few more formalities he went away.

Madame watched him until he disappeared down the Rue St. Denis, and then began in a soliloquizing tone:—"The lad has been drinking again; he moves in too fast a set by half. If Madame de Bourrienne could come back from her grave, she would not be over pleased at the pace 'mon petit Paul' is running."

Monsieur glanced sheepishly over his paper, but ventured no remark, and Madame continued:—"I could see a look of his father in the boy to-day; although he favors Madame strongly in features. Poor Philippe de Bourrienne! he is not long for this world. 'Mon petit Paul' will be fairly rich one of these days, Carbonnet."

"Yes, my love."

"I intend that he shall marry our Julie."

The paper fell from Monsieur's hands, and with wide-open eyes he regarded his self-avowed match-making spouse.

Well, why was Monsieur so dumbfounded? Was it not a worthy match?

"I—I thought you did not favor Bourrienne," stammered Monsieur, getting very red and uneasy as he thought of a certain little article reposing within the breast of his coat.

Then the storm broke. Madame had been mustering her forces, and it fell with its customary violence.

Ah well, all the old fools were not dead—neither were the young ones, for that matter. Would it not have been better to discover her sentiments upon the subject before resorting to unprincipled strategy? She was disgusted with him and surprised at Bourrienne. Had he come to her, as he should have done, and declared his preference for Julie, like a man,

she would have done all in her power to aid his suit; but no, he must needs resort to underhand means—bah! it was shocking. Would Monsieur kindly take the vile bribe he had received from the young scapegrace, and break it into a thousand pieces beneath the veranda rail.

Sheepishly, like a dog caught in the act of doing that which he should not, Monsieur obeyed. There was a crash of breaking glass, and two blonde heads bobbed into view at a window opposite. Sebastopol looked on and wagged his tail approvingly. A rather strong odor was mingled with the delicate scent of the wisteria blossoms, and Monsieur resumed his seat. Madame made some remark about thinking he should be ashamed to let these young *faineants* know that she was obliged to keep him upon short allowance, and swept into the house.

Meanwhile, young Bourrienne having made a detour of several streets, at length found himself, like "the brave and daring men" who started forth in the school books, back at the place from which he had started, and leaning over a low iron fence in the rear of the Carbonnet house, prepared to watch Julie Carbonnet as she created a hopeless devastation in the midst of Monsieur's rose garden.

She was a pretty little thing—not a beauty, by any means, although many had been known

to call her beautiful. On the other hand, a great many, particularly intimate friends of her own sex, had been so lacking in diplomacy as to apply to her that very aggravating adjective—plain—which to a woman whose mirror belies all claims she may have to loveliness, is more galling than a more emphatic derogative would be. Call a woman homely, ay, ugly if you will, but for the sake of all you hold dear, forbear from classifying her under the head of that commonplace term of mediocrity—plain—which forever bars her from distinction, favorable or unfavorable. If she is homely, she has some claim to distinction; if beautiful, or even pretty, she is distinguished indeed; but—plain—bah! in her own eyes she becomes a nonentity.

"Fascinating" was the word that shaped itself in Bourrienne's mind as he silently watched her moving about among the rose beds, stopping now and again to test a blossom's freshness by shaking the slender stalks, and manifesting her chagrin by a pretty frown of impatience when the rosy petals showered the grass beneath.

Though she lacked that piquancy for which the French women are noted, her face was not without charm and vivacity;—soft brown hair of unusual thickness, and of the color of the sea-weed, neither light nor dark, rolled care-

lessly back from a face decidedly Grecian in its contours, and of the dark olive complexion common to women of darker locks—her female friends classified her under the category of "sallow women"; a wide mouth relieved from the necessity of being a disfiguring feature by the dazzling whiteness of the perfect teeth; and eyes—Julie Carbonnet's eyes had been a subject of dispute among certain of her admirers upon more than one occasion. Monsieur Leroi, the artist upon la Rue Favart, declared they were black, with strange lights in them at times; St. Leon, the connoisseur, called them hazel; while others asserted that they must necessarily be brown, as no color other than brown ever accompanied that style of complexion; but "mon petit Paul," who had looked into their lustrous depths one night beneath the chandelier in Madame Villemain's ball-room, could tell you that they were blue—"darkly, deeply, beautifully blue"—and as expressive a pair of eyes as one would care to see. Shaded by long, dark lashes, they gave a sad, dreamy expression to the countenance, which expression her enemies termed "lackadaisical," but to true admirers of the beautiful was the little Parisienne's most potent charm. But why should one endeavor to describe a face when that peculiar attribute which lends to the countenance its greatest attraction,

must remain undescribed for want of a finer art in word protrayal than mortals possess? For instance, in describing a certain woman we say :—"The eyes are blue and large; the hair blonde; features regular and of the patrician caste; and the complexion perfect in its blonde fairness." We now have as minute a description, perhaps, of one woman as most present-day writers are capable of giving, and yet we can picture to ourselves a score of women, each possessing the above-mentioned characteristics, and yet resembling one another in no marked degree. In the expression lies the personality, and who can portray in words the inimitable charm of woman's personality? There lies her success in society, her power of fascination among those persons who comprise her particular court, and above all her success as the head and guide of a home circle.

The odor of Bourrienne's cigar began to pervade the rose garden, and Julie glanced quickly about to detect its source. A bright blush arose to her face upon discovering the intruder, and one hand was involuntarily raised to arrange the pretty, disordered tresses. Of late the busy guests around Mrs. Grundy's tea-table had linked her name so frequently with that of the man before her, that a feeling of embarrassment possessed the girl whenever they chanced to meet.

"Pardon me, Mlle. Carbonnet, for stealing upon you unawares, but Madame your aunt told me I should find you here, and so waiving all ceremony I decided to announce myself."

"You are forgiven; ceremony should not exist between friends. We had begun to think—aunt and I—that you had forgotten all about us."

"Indeed? I am honored then, Mlle. Carbonnet. I did not suppose that either you or Madame gave the matter a thought."

"Are they not beauties?" she asked, looking down at the gorgeous blossoms in her arms to hide the foolish little flush occasioned by his words. "But perhaps you do not care for flowers; they are for the hospital at St. Jacques."

"Yes, they are lovely—but may I come in?"

"Considering the fact that you are already half over the fence, I suppose you deem an answer superfluous. I'll lay the longest stemmed of these roses in the fountain, where they will keep fresh and cool; the rest you may help me to arrange while we sit under the apple-trees at the end of the garden."

An apple orchard is rarely considered a necessary adjunct to a Parisian mansion, and in most if not all cases the rural luxury is vainly enjoyed. The Carbonnet house, however, be-

ing situated upon the site of the old Deschamps homestead, could boast a scraggly growth of the commonplace trees in the rear of that more recent innovation, the regulation rose-garden. At old Henri Deschamps' death the old home was devastated and a modern mansion erected in its place, for the new Madame Carbonnet, having suddenly acquired worldly airs and notions, must needs possess that first and foremost essential, a respectable looking town house. Out of a lingering regard for old Henri, however, on Madame's part, the apple orchard, the pride of his heart, was allowed to remain. Not one of the household, however, excepting Julie, ever dreamed of partaking of its humble shelter—the tiny conservatory, with its potted palms and rare exotics, was more adapted to Madame's mode of thinking.

"You say my aunt sent you here?" asked Julie, as Bourrienne drew forward a rustic seat, and proceeded to divest it of the caterpillars and sundry other species of animation with which the leafy shelter abounded.

"Yes, she said you had gone to the garden, ostensibly to read, but presumed I should find you in the midst of dreams of the opera you are to see to-night."

There is a passage in the Old Testament which reads: "I said in my haste, all men are liars." The latter clause having since been

proven authentic in a marked degree, Bourrienne was no exception to the general rule.

A peculiar smile played about the corners of Julie's mouth as she bent over the roses. Not that she doubted "Mon petit Paul's" veracity, and was amused at the barefaced statement—but from his words she judged that Madame had begun to level her forces. Her powers of intuition were somewhat more developed than those of her companion, and for some time she had been cognizant of Madame's designs. Had Bourrienne's bump of egotism been duly developed, he must have realized that Madame Carbonnet was nothing loath to an alliance between Julie and himself; but lacking even a shadow of conceit, he regarded the overtures and advances of the thoughtful dame as acts prompted by feelings of regard and friendship, rather than the skilful machinations of a match-making guardian. Indeed, he really feared Madame, and felt far more security in placing his confidence in Monsieur's hands.

Julie's fortune, left to her unconditionally by another branch of the Carbonnet family, being a goodly one, these manœuvres on Madame's part would seem scarcely essential from an ordinary point of view; but Madame had ideas of her own, and intended that they should bear timely fruit.

Bourrienne stretched himself comfortably upon the long grass at Julie's feet.

"You fondle those roses as if they were sensible of feeling," he said. "If you are so fond of the beauties of nature, Mlle. Carbonnet, you would enjoy being in my place for the next few months; and that reminds me that I have come to bid Madame Carbonnet and you good-bye in case I should lack an opportunity of so doing between now and next Saturday."

Julie looked up in surprise. "Goodbye?" she repeated; "then you are going away from—Paris?"

He nodded affirmatively.

"Yesterday I received a letter from my father's solicitor, reminding me that out of respect and duty to that revered relative I should visit him as soon as my affairs—'pressing obligations' he sarcastically termed them—would permit. He wrote that my father had been in poor health for some time past, and that he feared a general breaking-down. I know he must have exaggerated the case, still I feel in duty bound to go. I have not seen him for years now, and the meeting will prove a pleasure to us both."

"Yes, if such is the case, you should not indeed delay. In after years the thought that you had neglected to respond to such a call might bring you no little sorrow. The pleasure of

the reunion will cause you to forget any little regrets you may have at leaving Paris."

Julie's eyes were raised involuntarily to Bourrienne's face as she said the last words in a strangely quiet little voice. He was busily assisting a furry caterpillar along a slender, drooping grass blade, and did not look up.

"Yes, I know our meeting will be one of unalloyed pleasure," he replied. "I am not sorry after all to leave Paris, although it is now in its gayest season. Gaiety is a vain thing at the best, and perhaps a little rest from this ceaseless round of entertainment may prove more beneficial than detrimental to such as I."

Julie said nothing, and for a few moments an embarrassing silence reigned, broken at length by Bourrienne.

"My father is at an old place ten miles south of Versailles; a gloomy old rat-trap of a house, but none the less interesting for all that, if my childish recollections do not play me false. Such a place as you would delight in, Mlle. Carbonnet. The country thereabout is noted for its rare agrestic scenery, so pleasing to the artistic eye, and the immediate grounds of the old place are as uncultivated as the wildest forest. How the house itself is I do not know; my earliest recollection of the place is of being carried through an immense room in the arms of an old house-servant, one Pierre Favre, and

being told to look at a few painted faces that adorned the walls. I know now that they must have been pictures of my mother's people, but then the old room with its silent occupants represented to my excited fancy some weird and gloomy dungeon where I should be left to condole with the no less weird inhabitants did I but lose my hold upon the old servant's shoulder. One picture in particular held a peculiar fascination for me, It was that of an old man in the uniform of an English officer, with snow-white hair, and eagle eyes which seemed to hold my gaze with a strange persistency. An idea took root in my childish fancy that this grim warrior held a settled dislike for myself in his martial breast, and the approach in that direction was a signal for me to cling spasmodically to old Pierre's neck. I expected at any moment to see the aged soldier step down from his gilded frame and challenge me with this dislike. If by chance I happened to glance back when near the end of the room, his stern eyes were still upon me, still unrelenting and piercing in their gaze. I long to revisit those childish haunts; to look once more on the face of the old warrior, and see if time or absence has softened the severity of his grim old visage. Now that the old recollections are so strong within me, I am in a perfect fever to see the old place."

Julie listened with a pleased expression to these reminiscences of childhood. Anything concerning Paul de Bourrienne held a peculiar interest for her—an interest quite well defined in her own breast. She wondered what made the usually conservative Bourrienne talk so fast that day. It puzzled her, for extreme reticence in regard to his own affairs had always been one of his characteristics. He was worried about his father, no doubt, and that accounted for his unwonted excitement.

For an hour longer Bourrienne and Julie sat beneath the apple trees. The pleased look of interest in her dark eyes led him on to relate tales of his childhood and boyhood, and laughable and sad incidents of his life at school. He told her of being sent for to attend the deathbed of his mother, and how all the world looked dark and empty when he returned to Paris, after the allotted two weeks of mourning had expired; how at the age of twenty he had left college, and plunged into a life which had no aim, no aspirations; a bare existence, for he merely lived. At length he arose to go.

"Has not my aunt invited you to remain to dinner? Surely she is not so lacking in hospitality."

"She has, indeed, been kind enough to invite me, but beside the fact that I am not in dinner dress, there is an important engage-

ment down town, which will prevent me accepting. She furthermore granted me the privilege of visiting Monsieur Carbonnet's box to-night, which privilege I shall take advantage of, can I but gain your permission as well as hers."

"We shall, of course, be delighted to have you. Uncle is always half asleep at the opera, and one tires of gazing at the sea of faces during the waits. I enjoy having someone with whom to discuss the piece."

Bourrienne bit his lips. Was his presence, then, only welcome as a variation from monotony? Was he, then, to serve as a source of amusement, merely because other, and more welcome sources no doubt, were lacking? Probably his company would be considered proportionally uninteresting, had he not a reliable foil in the shape of an extremely dull and unattractive old uncle.

"In case any unlooked-for circumstance should prevent me from attending," he said coldly, "I shall bid you adieu now."

Julie looked puzzled. She sincerely regretted the occasion that called him from among them, she said, and hoped the lawyer's fears would prove groundless. However, he would enjoy the return to his old home, and would miss but little by his absence from Paris.

He thanked her. For several years a selfish

regard for his own pleasure had caused him to forget all else, he said; now he should reform in earnest, and for a change, consider the welfare of others. It was growing late and he would not detain her longer. Then he bowed and left.

Julie remained seated beneath the apple-trees in Monsieur Carbonnet's garden, with downcast eyes, and hands tightly clasped in her lap. What made everything seem so dark and gloomy? she wondered. Why was everyone so cold? Even the flowers seemed drooping and sad. A tear stole out from under the long lashes, and made its way down to the crushed blossoms in her hand. Burying her face in the roses, Julie wept.

Why is it that the human tongue is ever used as a disguise for the thoughts? We clothe our inmost sentiments in such strange and foreign garbs, that recognition of the original to those nearest and dearest to us, is an impossibility. To the eyes of a stranger, the disguising garments are so many uncouth and ill-fitting garbs, through which the fraud may be easily detected, but the eyes of love, ever watchful for signs of coldness in the being upon whom they have lavished that all-absorbing passion, are woefully blinded, and from the superficial words that have found their origin, not in the heart, but in that instru-

ment of evil—the tongue—they derive all manner of strange and erroneous fancies regarding that being's sentiments toward themselves. In light words purposely dropped to inspire one with the impression that he or she holds but an inferior place in the heart, growing coldness is seen; in careless repartee, prompted by mutual feelings of imaginary injury, each infatuated one sees studied hate for himself or herself, and so on until the misunderstanding becomes of life-long duration, and brings only despair and misery in its wake.

CHAPTER III.

L'OPÉRA COMIQUE.

ON the night of Mlle. Blanche Lannes' first appearance upon a Parisian stage, l' Opéra Comique, in la Place Favart, presented a most gorgeous and brilliant spectacle. That the singer's fame had been wide-spread before her, was evident from the enormous crush with which society saw fit to greet her.

From the petted child of fortune to the now elevated "groundling" of Shakespearian fame, all were there, awaiting with almost breathless anticipation the appearance of one woman.

The boxes represented the wealth and aristocracy, and had those favored ones of God's creatures come with the expectation of beholding a princess of the Orient, they could not, out of respect to one of those gorgeous beings, have displayed more splendor and brilliancy of apparel. The fair ones of Paris vied with one another upon this occasion, as upon all others, to see who should be considered the most charming among them—who should be endowed with that coveted title, "belle of the opera." Faded women whose days of conquest were long since past, endeavored by the art of

dress and cosmetic—those two indispensable articles which in the eyes of the worldly cover a multitude—to outdo their fairer sisters; the young débutanté whom one season of flattery had inspired with the belief that her surpassing loveliness would down all rivalry, came in her glory of anticipation, only to suffer a severe wavering of her over-confident hopes when confronted with other débutantés whom her worldly little heart could not but admit were more lovely than her very lovely self; the beautiful woman of whom several seasons of adoration had made a goddess—in her own estimation at least—stepped into her luxurious carriage fully resolved to be the happy recipient of the golden apples. Had not her last fleeting glance in her mirror assured her that she, and she alone of the countless contestants, would deserve the title of "most beautiful among the beautiful?"

Refined old ladies—a few of the dowager class, others whose lack of corpulency barred them from that appellation—looked on with a lively interest. 'Tis true their rather dubious charms withheld them from any part in the rivalry other than as spectators, still their interest was in nowise diminished. Perhaps an overlooked daughter yet remained upon their anxious hands; perhaps somebody else's daughter was still among the unbidden lots. Dear things! they had their hands full.

Then there were the other types—the painted, tawdry woman, whose seat in the *loge de balcon* had cost upwards of six francs; the quiet, neat little woman with the smoothly plaited hair and the immaculate lace at neck and wrists—the woman who attended the theatre once in every two or three years with her good man, and who had never quite recovered from her habit of exclaiming "Did you ever!" at every move before the footlights. Then there was the aggravating type—the would-be interpreter, the loud, excitable young woman who felt called upon to anticipate the trend of developments, and to communicate her startling views to her less gifted and presumably half-witted companion.

The orchestra stalls were lined with young exquisites, and old aristocrats of the beau type whose padded figures and painful monocles were very much in evidence. The former smiled blandly at their well dressed mammas in the boxes, who smiled blandly in return; while the latter, most of whom were busily scanning their programmes for familiar names in the soubrette rôle, interrupted this interesting occupation from time to time, to glare at some young collegian who saw fit to edify his companions, and anyone within twenty yards of him who cared to listen, with a detailed account of his last conquest *de cœur;*—or to gaze

with undisguised contempt upon some one among their own number whose padding was more artistically applied or the shade of whose wig approached more nearly than their own to that coveted Titian hue.

The first two rows in the pit were as usual monopolized by students, whose self-satisfied mien and nicely arranged locks were sure to take by storm the hearts of the female professionals. Could they indeed resist anything so fascinating? One of their number had been chosen to the enviable office of extender of compliments, and as he held in his nervous grasp an enormous bouquet of hot-house blossoms, he was the envied of all eyes, His manly chest, which had expanded to almost twice its ordinary proportions by the dignity of his office, seemed liable to burst the immaculate shirt front, so great indeed was the pressure. It was evident that he could hardly wait until that moment when, as the cynosure of all eyes, he should lean gracefully forward and with a softly whispered compliment, meant for her ears alone, place in her hands the fragrant token and be rewarded by a dazzling smile of acceptance.

Theatrical critics, and professors of music were there in abundance—the former either to overwhelm with their freezing satire or laud with praises in the egotistic manner so

peculiarly their own. As surely as does the trained eye of an actress single out one of these abhorred creatures, so surely does she underrate herself in her endeavors to excel in his forcedly valued estimation.

The professors formed a little class of their own. Neither the beauty of the star nor the dramatic qualities of the piece had drawn them thither. They came in the rôle of their profession, to smile with approval when the prima donna with marvelous power achieved some difficult trick note; or to frown with dissatisfaction as some discord in the chorus struck upon their cultured ears.

Ah! 'twas a gala night at l'Opéra Comique! Worldly care with its grim and stolid visage was allowed no entrance there; harassing and bitter recollections of hardships without were routed by the glare of fashion and splendor; gloomy thoughts of pressing creditors on la Rue du Bac were lulled if not obliterated into that strange "don't care" condition destined to be succeeded, when the charm of music and merriment had ceased, by more stringent pangs of worriment and apprehension; unpleasant home associations were for the time forgotten; and pleasure-loving, enthusiastic Paris showered favors unlimited upon the gods of mirth and revelry. They came to hear, to see, to laugh, to applaud, to drink of the drug

of forgetfulness from the seductive lips of a syren, and they dreamed not, that ere the hour of midnight chimed from the towers of Notre Dame, that sparkling, brilliant, breathing throng would be transformed into a writhing, wailing mass of desperate humanity, and that the morning sun streaming through the dingy streets of Paris, would behold a blackened, smouldering heap where once had stood a gorgeous temple of Comus. A blackened, smouldering, unsightly heap, serving to entomb the charred and hideous corpses of the unfortunate wretches snatched from the lap of revelry, and hurled headlong into the presence of the Omnipotent; corpses gaunt and pitiable—some still ironically bedecked with emblems of worldliness; bony, brittle arms encircled with bands of gold; blackened throats adorned with sparkling jewels and seeming to cry out in derisive frenzy to their Maker:—"So frail is vanity!"

Among the last to enter the boxes were Monsieur and Madame Carbonnet and Julie. The latter had dumbfounded her hearers at the dinner table, by quietly observing that she did not care to go; she pleaded all manner of excuses, to none of which would Madame listen.

"Don't be a fool, Julie, but put on your dress and come."

"I do not feel well, aunt, and should much prefer remaining quietly at home. My head has ached all evening."

"Nonsense child—pure nonsense—that will pass off during the excitement of the play, and you will congratulate yourself that you allowed us to persuade you. Come—there is not so very much time to waste."

So Julie, trying to make herself believe that she had no desire to go whatever, but was being persuaded and compelled by irresistible forces, repaired to her room to don her dress for the evening. There was no petite maid to hold up her hands in admiration, and murmur—"*Ah, Mademoiselle, c'est tres belle! Ça magnifique!*" as the toilet progressed; for madame, excepting where self was concerned, was of a penurious cast of mind, and Julie, though she had ideas of her own, was forced to see them remain in embryo, as her own money was still in trust.

An infatuated student, one Alexandre Paget, had called in the afternoon and had carried Julie an immense bouquet of English violets. They still were lying in the violet-colored pasteboard in which they had come, their delicate fragrance scenting the entire room, and their purple faces smiling up into Julie's, as if they craved a place amidst the fluffy folds of chiffon at her breast. She buried her

face in them for a moment, drinking in the delightful perfume, then laid them aside and fastened a crushed and half-faded cluster of garden roses at her breast.

Though later than many, they were still too early for the curtain when they reached the theatre, and Julie amused herself by trying to discern familiar faces in the vast gathering.

"Do not look now, aunt, but there is a lady in the box above ours on the opposite side, who has been staring at us ever since we entered; can you tell me who she is?"

Madame Carbonnet, with the unmistakable air of a diplomat, immediately turned her eyes as far away from the box in question as possible, and after rolling them over pit and gallery, meanwhile pretending to call Julie's attention to something near the door, at length brought them to rest upon the box opposite.

"Why, bless me, child, that is Madame Regnier, the wife of the broker Regnier; I thought everyone knew her at sight. You say she has been staring? I don't know what the attraction can be, unless it is your uncle," she added, with a sarcastic little glance in that gentleman's direction. Madame would be playful at times, but that playfulness often waxed into biting sarcasm at the expense of her lord. Upon this occasion that much-abused

individual greeted the sally good-naturedly. His dinner had set well that night, and besides that all-important fact, he had not been troubled of late with that aristocratic complaint—the gout. He could afford to be submissive. Turning to Julie he slyly remarked:

"I think I can guess upon whom Madame Regnier's stares are centered, my dear. Has not young Bourrienne been paying rather marked attentions to somebody of late?"

Of course, Julie denied all knowledge of such a thing, but blushed with pleasure at the very idea, nevertheless. Madame Carbonnet immediately pricked up her ears, and Monsieur, as pleased as his worthy spouse would have been at the thought of being the divulger of a rare bit of gossip, continued in his drawling way:

"It is common talk at the club that she has taken a fancy to young Bourrienne. Of course, I cannot vouch for the authenticity of the report, but they say so nevertheless."

"But, uncle, is she not married?"

Monsieur Carbonnet elevated his scraggy eyebrows just the merest fraction of an inch, and his spouse with a little cough which meant worlds, observed, "Julie, you do so amuse me with your naive remarks."

Julie said nothing, but when Madame Regnier was not looking in her direction, she

studied her face, and wondered what sort of a man Regnier was that he could suffer his wife's affections to be alienated. The thought did not take a definite shape in her mind—but it was there nevertheless—that it was not strange that any woman should be fascinated by Paul de Bourrienne.

At length the curtain arose amidst a murmur of approval from the house. The pleasure seekers had become tired of criticising their neighbors' gowns and characteristics, and now looked to the stage for a more profitable source of amusement. They found it.

Mlle. Lannes proved all that their grandest expectations had conjured up. As in the rôle of a misjudged queen, resplendent in velvet and diamonds, and voluminous ruff, she moved majestically before the footlights, the vast edifice burst forth in homage to her beauty. Fastidious Paris was pleased. They saw her through the first act, a light, airy, fantastic combination of songs and dances—scarcely adapted to any great display of vocal talent; but Paris had come to be pleased, and responded warmly.

As the curtain arose upon the second act there was an audible stir among the spectators; some leaned forward to obtain a better view of the stage; others settled themselves comfortably back in their seats, preferring that

the rainbow should seek them, and not they the rainbow.

Mlle. Lannes moved slowly to the footlights. Again a murmur of approbation greeted the vivacious beauty. She bowed gracefully, and after a few moments of persistent commendation, the applause subsided and the Parisians waited in breathless expectation for the beautiful lips to open.

Her song, a plea for pity to her arrogant judges, began in a low, soothing mezzo, like the rippling of a silvery brook over glistening stones, then gradually swelled to the proportions of a deep, melodious contralto; and, as the story of her wrongs seemed to stir her inmost soul, her voice burst into a sea of melody which filled the vast edifice from pit to dome.

As she ceased, silence reigned so intense that the suppressed breathing of individuals could be plainly distinguished. A confused murmur arising in the pit gradually grew into a roar of exultation; the "groundling" applauded vociferously; the professors of music were seen to rub their hands exultingly; the dignified student forgot his graceful bow and speech, and the immense bouquet landed at Mlle. Lannes' feet with the practised curve of an athlete; pretty women joined in the applause to the detriment of dainty gloves and still daintier hands; handkerchiefs and fans were

waved in foolish confusion; men whose wives had been detained at home and youths unaccompanied by their fiancées, leaned forward in their seats and shouted her name; a pronounced smacking of lips emanated from the students' quarter.

Such was the enthusiasm at l'Opéra Comique on that memorable night in the fall of 18—.

A curtain call in the second act in a Parisian theatre is like the subterranean "rara avis" in a flock of white sea-gulls. The clamorous one that greeted Mlle. Lannes was an event unprecedented in its histrionic annals. Upon that night some strange, immoderate enthusiasm seemed to stir the souls of the listeners, bidding them give vent to their unwonted emotions in boisterous expressions of praise and commendation. Could it have been that some shadowy premonition of the horror awaiting them had awakened lurking apprehensions in their breasts? Or was it but the frantic grasp of the spirit destined ere long to be torn from its citadel; the desperate struggle between the flesh and the infinite; the roaring of waters before the flood; the premonitory growl of the approaching tempest; the rallying of the energies before the battle; the violent resistance of the mandates of God? Certain it was that the vast gathering had reached the superlative

degree in its enthusiasm. Mlle. Lannes' fame was secured.

As she responded to the final call, the black eyes of the singer were raised to Monsieur Carbonnet's box, and as for the fraction of an instant they rested upon the face of Julie Carbonnet, an unmistakable look of triumph appeared about the mouth. Julie had leaned forward, her lips parted and her eyes sparkling with suppressed emotion. Again the dark eyes were raised to hers, and for a moment each held the other's gaze with a strange fascination—then Julie arose and, tearing the cluster of faded roses from her breast, threw them at the singer's feet.

The second act was nearly over when Bourrienne entered the stalls. Since leaving Julie in the afternoon, he had been debating within himself whether he should stay away altogether, thus showing her that she had not made so deep an impression upon his heart after all—or go, and by ignoring her completely, give her to understand that his society must be appreciated upon its own merits. She had no doubt forgotten all about him by now, and probably his absence would not be noticed, so there would be little satisfaction for himself if he followed the first course. No, he would go, and by appearing totally oblivious to her presence, give her to understand that she did

not monopolize the paramount place in his heart. Perhaps she would not care, but she would at least feel piqued by his coldness.

As he entered, his eyes turned involuntarily toward Monsieur Carbonnet's box, and encountered those of Julie, which had been busily though half unconsciously scanning the stalls. Her attention was immediately concentrated upon the stage, as though the outcome of the act had acquired a sudden and uncommon interest for her. Bourrienne frowned in annoyance. In his eyes she was by far the most beautiful girl there, and he longed, despite his firm resolve to the contrary, to spend the evening by her side. The play, which seemed to hold all other spectators in a spellbound interest, had no attraction for him whatever; he could not keep his eyes from Julie's face, and when by any chance her glance was turned in his direction, the eyes of both were quickly withdrawn.

At the close of the act, Bourrienne was leaving the stalls when he encountered a charming bow and smile from Madame Carbonnet, who, with a graceful little flirt of her elaborate fan, motioned for him to join their party. Could he afford to displease Madame by ignoring so flattering and unexpected an attention? Hardly! He would be obliged to respond for the sake of gallantry if nothing

more. With an appearance of outward martyrdom, but inwardly exulting, he made his way toward a dressing-room in the foyer, and, having arranged his hair and tie with a great deal of precision and care, surveyed himself in the mirror with no small degree of satisfaction, an act of which young Bourrienne had hitherto never been guilty.

Upon entering the box he bowed low to Madame, shook hands with Monsieur, and returned Julie's nod with a bow freezing in its studied politeness. Then, seating himself, he began an animated discussion of the play, dwelling so long upon the numerous charms and marvellous vocal ability of the star, that little imps of jealousy began to dance before Julie's eyes. She felt wounded and displeased, and wished she had persevered and remained at home.

She was relieved when the curtain arose on the third act, and put a stop to conversation. Monsieur and Madame Carbonnet, who had a genuine interest in the hero and heroine of the piece, became immediately absorbed in affairs progressing on the stage, and Paul and Julie were left to their not very agreeable meditations. It was during this state of affairs that a page hurriedly entered the box, and handed Bourrienne two written messages, one merely a slip of folded paper, the other

bearing the appearance of a telegraphic communication. The former he immediately crushed in his hand, and Julie, who was the only one who had witnessed the incident, watched him nervously as he broke the seal of the latter. At the first glance, his manner betrayed concern, which immediately gave place to alarm and his face became intensely white. He glanced up and met Julie's eyes riveted upon him with a mingling of sorrow and apprehension in their gaze. There was something else there, too, that made his heart beat more quickly than was its wont, and caused the blood to mount again to his face. Moving toward her in the shadow of the curtains, he clasped her hand beneath the folds of her opera cape, and bending his head to a level with hers, looked steadily into her eyes for a moment and then said in a husky voice:

"It's come sooner than I expected; I'm away to-night."

She did not answer, but her eyelids drooped and her hand trembled in his. Bourrienne bent still lower—evidence of his conquest had made him bold—and his lips all but brushed the soft waves of hair above her cheek as he whispered:

"I know it's—yes—Julie; for God's sake be true."

A tremulous little "Until death, Paul,"

answered him, and thrusting the message he had received into her hand, he was gone.

For a moment she sat motionless—dreaming. He loved her after all—he, Paul de Bourrienne, whose love more than one woman coveted. What more could mortal ask?

Opening the crushed paper in her hand, she with difficulty made out its purport. It was dated from a small town near Versailles, and read:

PAUL DE BOURRIENNE, 38 Boulevard Voltaire, Paris.
Come at once—your father has suffered a stroke. Life despaired.

LUCIEN DU MAURIER.

Her heart went out immediately to Paul in his trouble, and she lamented the fact that she was powerless to help him. When Madame Carbonnet's attention was withdrawn long enough from the stage to notice his absence, Julie explained the circumstances.

"Dear me, poor boy, I am very sorry for him—he will be quite well off now. Is he not the only heir, my love?" turning to Monsieur. Startled by the endearing term so foreign to his ears, her "love" aroused himself sufficiently to make an affirmative reply. He was generally well posted in such matters. Madame immediately lapsed into studious silence. She was estimating the value of the Bourrienne estate.

Meanwhile Julie gazed absently at the stage. Her thoughts were elsewhere, for she was trying to realize the happiness so suddenly hers. Ere long she was brought to earth by becoming conscious that her half-waking gaze was being returned with a two-fold intensity by a pair of dark eyes. The young actor, whose handsome face and figure she had noticed during the evening, seeming to become suddenly aware of his lack of propriety, turned away, and Julie, blushing deeply, withdrew beneath the shadow of the curtains.

The theatre was now darkened for a white-light effect, which was to show the banished and imprisoned queen confined within the bare and gloomy cell, but radiant with the glow with which her innocence and purity surrounded her. All eyes were upon the stage, and as for a moment the brilliant light flashed upon them, displaying the ill-used sovereign in all her glory, the audience applauded wildly. The radiance gradually faded out, and all were waiting for a response to their urgent encore, when a sharp, explosive report from behind the scenes caused them to move restlessly in their seats. This uneasiness was still further augmented, when without warning the few lights left burning at the rear of the house, went out, leaving the theatre in total darkness. For a moment

the place was strangely still—then a hoarse voice near the stage shrieked the one word, "Fire!" It was enough! At once Pandemonium reigned. The screams of women were mingled with the hoarse shouts of the theatre officials, as they struggled to subdue the panic. Smoke accompanied by jets of flame began to creep out from beneath the staging, causing those who saw it to fight their way with renewed vehemence, trampling their fellow-creatures beneath their feet in their mad rush for liberty.

Only those who have stood upon the brink of a precipice and felt some resistless force hurling them on to destruction; only those who have cowered transfixed before the awful, grinning jaws of violent death, can picture the frenzy, the agony, the desperation, the fury of that writhing mob. They shrieked, they moaned, they called upon God in their terror, while ever foremost in the heart of each was the damning but human sentiment of self-preservation.

Julie, pale with fright, clung to the railing of the box, and watched as if fascinated the shadowy, up-turned faces below, showing white and agonized as the dim glow at the rear of the stage grew to a yellow threatening glare. Her uncle had placed his arms about Madame Carbonnet and herself, and had got-

ten them to the door of the box where a crush of panic-stricken people from the boxes above had separated them from her, and she had drawn back into its shelter, her heart beating wildly with fear. Oh, why had Paul been called away? His love would have enabled him to find some way to save her. She moaned aloud in her terror and despair.

Suddenly she felt herself lifted in a quick, strong grasp and borne toward the door. Her opera cape was wrapped hastily about her face and shoulders, then there was a sudden dash, and she felt herself being crushed through a mass of frantic humanity—nay, human no longer, they had become maddened creatures—half brute and half devil. Already the heat and crackle of the flames had reached the distracted senses of the furious mob, causing those who had sunk helpless from exhaustion and terror, to make one more desperate effort for preservation. Limbs were crushed and trampled; clothing was rent asunder; faces were bruised and mangled by the infuriate mass; women fell to rise no more; men weak and breathless sank downward in the vital wave—it passed on and left them bleeding, misshapen masses, never to draw life's breath again.

What mattered it if, in that breathing, growling throng, hundreds weakened, swayed,

and were mowed down like broken reeds, so long as the rest—the unsummoned ones, the ones of blood and iron, with nerves of triple steel and breaths like she-wolves—what mattered it, so long as they reached God's free world again? They who had shrunk from the outer air in winter's cold, cursed it in summer's heat, breathed it always as a valueless thing, now craved like distraught wretches for a single breath.

Hysterical and trembling, Julie clung to she knew not whom—he had chosen to save her—that was all. She could feel his heart beating in long, painful strokes against her own, and his breath was coming quick and labored, like that of a swimmer who is nearing his end, yet she felt that he would not quail; there was something in the strength of the arms about her, and in the heedless way in which he fought along, that lent assurance to her prayers, and she knew that unless suffocation overcame her, she need have no fear of death.

A woman shrieked and moaned behind them, and her voice like that of some demon in hell arose wild above the masses—"We are damned, damned, damned! A plague has fallen upon us—next will come a boiling flood!"—then she fell and was silenced forever. A weak child's voice nearby was praying to St. Genevieve, the patron saint—a man's cry, that of some mad-

dened wretch, was heard to silence her with an oath. Julie shuddered; the rabble was growing fainter in her ears, her head reeled and swam for a moment, but she drew her breath hard and set her teeth in desperation—she would not faint quite away. Then the night air struck upon her bursting forehead, and she knew that the fight was won.

Someone lifted her into a carriage, and a voice not altogether unfamiliar to her, but sounding strange and far away, gave the address of her uncle's house. The buzz of the engines was in her ears; the cries of the sick and injured; the curses of the desperate; and she shrank back shuddering, fearing to look upon the scene around her. She was giddy, dizzy-headed, dreaming—some one bent above her; she felt the damp locks brushed gently back from her forehead, and heard a voice whisper:

"God forgive me—Bourrienne was right—she is an angel."

Then the carriage door banged to, and some one was saying: "You're an unscrupulous chap, Jules Benoit, but in the face of a scene like this the devil himself could be trusted. See that the girl gets home in safety, or to-morrow you lose your stand—I have both your name and number. I'm going back now—they need every man, God knows—good-night."

Some one passed the carriage window. Julie saw his face as in a dream—later it all came back. It was that of the actor whose persistent gaze had annoyed her.

It seemed as though she had slept for hours, when, dazed and bewildered, she opened her eyes and looked about her. She was being driven rapidly along the Rue St. Antoine; all around was a dull red glare, illuminating to almost the light of day the crowded thoroughfares, and even reaching to the banks of the Seine, whose waters were tinged with a lurid yellow glow. With a gasp of horror she raised the carriage window, and looked back in the direction from which they had come. People were hurrying along the street, some weeping, others talking in loud, excited voices; ambulances were being driven to and fro; corps of gendarmes were busy lining off the doomed structures from the curious mob.

The sky in the south was the color of blood —now pale, now deep, now crimson to the east and west; now darting into yellow flame and disclosing clouds of rolling smoke, dense and ominous, curling upwards, their sailing passage beset with tiny whirling sparks, each seeking out a treacherous goal in its wavering flight. Along the house-tops, the forms of the fire-fighters stood out in the night, like animated figures upon a back-ground of white, their every move depicted.

Julie drew back and covered her face with her hands. A deadly horror had assailed her. What if her uncle and aunt had perished in the flames! But no, it could not be so—they had been among the first to reach the outer passage: it was only the poor wretches who were pinned below near the staging, and those high up in the crowded balconies who had met that fearful fate. God help them! perhaps weeks and weeks might pass ere those living ones who waited in agony, would learn who were numbered with the dead.

Monsieur and Madame Carbonnet had escaped. They had been borne by the human tide down the stairway leading from the boxes, and from thence had gotten to the street through the actors' entrance on the left of the stage. Of course there was great rejoicing, when Julie arrived in safety. Madame was laid up in bed surrounded by camphor and cologne bottles, and a dozen or more of attendants, among whom were half-dressed neighbors, and neighbors' servants, and Monsieur himself, very conspicuous by his attire, or more correctly speaking, his lack of attire—his apparel consisting of a hand-embroidered night-robe, a pair of spotted half-hose, and a white bandage which was wound about his head, leaving in view a small bald spot in the center, for his wig was gone.

Julie refused all offers of attendance from friends and servants; she was not injured in any way, she told them, and would go to bed and sleep off her fright. Sitting down in her room, she endeavored to collect her scattered senses. Two hours ago she had started for the theatre, with just the least bit of a weight upon her heart. Now she was back in her cosy little dressing-room, trying to realize the unexpected happenings of the evening. First, foremost and all-important—Paul de Bourriennne loved her—fire, curses, dying men's groans, gallant rescues—all were as secondary matters compared with that. Bourrienne loved her, and she was to become his wife. Then she thought of the man who had rescued her—the actor who had risked his life to save hers. How he must have suffered in that fearful crush; and her eyes filled with tears. Monsieur would find him in the morning, and would thank him for her.

The tall clock on the stairway leading to the hall chimed twelve before she aroused from her reveries and prepared for bed. Her eyelids would not close in sleep however, and she lay among the pillows, gazing absently at the hearth rug, and wondering when Paul would return. How thankful he would be that she had escaped death and injury, and she shivered as she thought of the woman who

had shrieked and fallen behind them. Then, in the natural sequence of thought, her mind returned to the actor. Who was he? she wondered. How she wished she had learned his name. Suddenly she thought of her programme—that would tell her.

Arising and slipping a dressing-gown over her night-dress, she entered the dressing-room to search for it. She remembered that her uncle had folded and adjusted it in the little receptacle in the front of her fan,—that, she had thrust into a pocket in the lining of her opera cape. The latter lay upon a couch near the door, where she had hurriedly thrown it upon entering. As she lifted it to see if the fan lay beneath, a small slip of paper fell from the folds. It had the appearance of having been crumpled in the hand. Holding it toward the gas-jet, Julie read the words—written in a dashing, feminine hand—"Dearest Paul." She hesitated—should she read further? She was a woman, and curiosity conquered.

"Dearest Paul:—

"Upon this, the night of my triumph, you will not surely fail to come to me, knowing that one little word of praise and love from your lips is dearer by far to me than the commendations of the multitude. Recall those happy days in London, dear Paul, and remember that Blanche Lannes' love can never change."

Julie's color arose, and she stared at the note with flashing eyes. Was Paul intimate with this woman? She trembled slightly, for the sudden changes of heat and cold that night had brought fever in their wake. No, it could not be so. How had the letter come there, she wondered. Then she remembered. The page who had delivered the message, calling him to his father, had also given him this, and in the excitement of the moment, he had crumpled it with the other and thrust it into her hand at parting. It must be some great mistake—Mlle. Lannes must mean some other Paul. She would think no more about it until he had an opportunity to explain.

Picking up her programme, she scanned the names in the caste. Louis de Bourbon, child king of France, Pierre La Fontaine; Gaston, duke of Orleans, Charles Sinclaire; Duke of Montmorency—ah, here it was—Duke of Sully, minister to the Court of Bourbon, and enemy to the Queen Regent, Mary de Medici—Lionel St. John. Lionel St. John—what a pretty name; he was an Englishman, then. Just then a servant's voice, that of a young provincial whom Madame had hired to tend the garden and do all sorts of work about the house, echoed from the hall below. Wrapping her gown hastily about her, Julie opened the door and leaned over the stair railing.

"Is the fire out, Stephané?"

"Yes, Mlle., they have prevented it from spreading, but l'Opéra Comique is in ashes."

"O dear, dear! and are many lives lost?"

"It is feared so, for hundreds are missing, but nothing can be ascertained until morning, the mob was so scattered. Just before I came away, the body of Madame Regnier, the lady who lives in the house at the corner—and many a time she has given me a franc piece for carrying messages for her, poor soul—was taken from the wreck, and it took three men to hold Regnier, he was so crazed with grief."

Julie started, and the word, retribution, came to her lips.

"And the actresses, Stephané? Mlle. Lannes, was she burned to death?"

"No, she escaped——"

"Go to bed, Julie," came in Madame's shrill voice from the front of the house.

"Yes, I'm going—good-night," and Julie's door closed.

Folding the programme and laying it carefully in a drawer of her dresser, she laid her head once more upon the pillow, but it was only to dream of Madame Regnier throwing crushed missives at dark-eyed courtiers.

CHAPTER IV.

A JOURNEY BY NIGHT.

UPON leaving the theatre, Bourrienne jumped into a cab and was driven rapidly to his apartments. His soul was in a tumult, and wavered between despair and joy. The news of his father's condition had greatly shocked him, but the unmistakable look of love that shone from Julie's eyes as she bade him Godspeed, had wrought a contraversion of feeling in his breast. Julie loved him! There was not a doubt of that now, but why did he not find it out before this sorrow had come to blast all chance of happiness?

Arriving at the Boulevard Voltaire, he let himself in by his pass-key, and tip-toed hurriedly up the stairs; for only the day before, the irate concierge had rated him in forcible terms for the disturbance he saw fit to make at times when all decent folk were in bed. Was it not enough, also, that he himself should be so oblivious to the comfort of others, but that he must have a mob of young scapegraces stumbling in and out of his apartments at all hours of the day and night? Hers

was a respectable house, she would have him know.

As he opened the door of his dressing-room, a sleepy-looking young fellow arose from a couch, where he had been comfortably stretched for the last few hours, and having cast a half-inch of cigarette in the grate, turned yawningly toward him. What was up, he asked. Bourrienne looked as shaky as one of Madame Jarley's wax-works. Had not Mademoiselle seen fit to appear?

"I have had sad news to-night, Maret. Help me to get a few things together, will you; and then ring up old Collot and see if he can get us a team by ten-thirty," and Bourrienne hurriedly proceeded to cram a travelling case with a confused and miscellaneous collection of wearing apparel and toilet articles.

The sleepy youth rubbed his eyes and looked disturbed. Was it anything serious? Anything about that affair at Melun?

"No, it's my father; a shock, I fear. Those cursed notaries know scarcely enough to last them over night. The message was about as explicit as one of Monsieur Rebout's tailor bills."

Maret arose, and began to fasten his collar and arrange his tie by the light of the sconce above the dresser. He was a good-looking chap, with

clearly cut features, and hair and brows as black as an Indian's. Though shorter than Bourrienne by some inches, and of a lighter, more wiry built, there was a certain shadowy resemblance between the two forms. The breadth of chest, the inward curve of the back, and the easy, swinging motion of the limbs were the same—so noticeably like was this last trait, that Bourrienne had flattered himself that Jean Maret had considered his gait a thing worthy of imitation. But though strangely alike in build and carriage, it would have been difficult to find two men more unlike in character and feature. Like Bourrienne, Maret was clean shaven, but the mouth and chin were moulded in a harder, less attractive cast, and while Bourrienne's smile was winning and fascinating, a cynical expression lurked about the lips of the other, and there was a doubtful, distrustful look in his black eyes.

They had met in the students' quarter, where, having been struck by a sudden but fleeting craze for art, Maret had, during the reckless stage of his existence, taken up his abode with some friends from the Polytechnique, at which he had acquired his early education. Drawn to each other by reason of various congenial tastes, Bourrienne proposed that Maret should share his rooms upon

the Boulevard Voltaire, his former companion, a wealthy young fellow from the provinces, having finished his course and returned home.

Their apartments were a rare combination of ease and art, for Madame's establishment ranked among the most exclusive of the quarter; and when funds were forthcoming readily, Madame spared neither time nor pains to render the place congenial to the tastes of the fastidious youth who lodged beneath her roof.

Neither Bourrienne nor his companion followed any profession, for the former had plenty of this world's goods, princely remittances from Pierrepont being placed regularly to his account; for Philippe de Bourrienne, although he had acquired his wealth by the sweat of his brow, lacked worldly wisdom where his son was concerned, and never dreamed that, from a practical point of view, it was essential that the youth should follow in his own footsteps, and in those of his father before him. He had plenty for both, let the lad enjoy life while he was young. And Maret, though he had no relatives, either rich or poor, and was seldom heard to speak of his family connections, managed to subsist upon the favors lavished upon him by a wealthy mam'selle, who, having taken a fancy to his youthful good looks while a charity scholar at

the Polytechnique, had put him through college at her own expense, and upon the bounty of Bourrienne, who, "whiles he possessed it," recked money at a lesser value than the air he breathed.

Having arranged his toilet to his satisfaction, Maret turned and began to put on his coat.

"What are you going to do, Jean?"

"I'm going with you."

"Nonsense, old man, go to bed and get your sleep. It's a gruesome trip enough for me, without dragging you into it. I'll have to drive all night in order to catch the first train from Versailles in the morning. It leaves at five-thirty."

"Nevertheless, I am going, Bourrienne, so get a move on," and Maret buttoned his coat to his chin, and drew on a pair of heavy driving-gloves.

Before half an hour had elapsed since his hurried departure from the theatre, Bourrienne was on his way to Versailles. As they drove at a rapid pace through the cool night air, he lapsed into a gloomy silence which, after a time, gave place to a sort of lethargy. Maret, glancing at his profile from time to time, noticed that a troubled frown disturbed the wonted calm of his features, and that his lips moved frequently, as if he were trying to con-

vince himself of some fact. Once he caught the muttered words: "Why in God's name did I delay? Heaven help me if anything happens!"

Worried by this dejection of his companion, Maret tried to arouse him by calling his attention to the even and rapid pace of the horses. Bourrienne started as if from a dream, and, sighing deeply, asked if Maret thought they would reach their destination by morning. "If we are too late, Jean, I can never forgive myself. I should have been the companion and support for his declining years, but, instead, I left him to the gloom and desolation of an old country house, with no consolation but what his servants, his books and a flinty old lawyer could afford; while I have been playing a fool's part in Paris."

"Oh, cheer up, old man! the horses are going at a rapid gait, and if they can maintain it for a few hours longer, we will reach the place before sunrise. Besides, your father's condition may not be as serious as was at first supposed. You know how rattled people get in a case of that kind. Whoever sent the message to you, was no doubt laboring under the excitement of the moment, and probably exaggerated the affair."

"You may be right, Maret; I pray God that you are. The message was sent by old Du

Maurier, his solicitor; it's true, he quoted from the doctor, but then doctors are often mistaken. Lawyers, as a rule though, are pretty calm individuals; they do not seem, to my mind, to be constituted upon a human basis. They are cold, sordid creatures, whose one object is gain—gain. I have never met this Du Maurier, strange to say, although he has had the management of my father's estate ever since I was a child. I shall have to introduce myself to him, I suppose, and perhaps to my father as well. Poor old dad, it is a long time now since we have met, and I am afraid he will not know me. I wish I could shake off this gloomy foreboding, but I cannot. You must know how I feel, Maret."

For a moment the latter was silent. Bourrienne's words had called up a bitter train of reflections in his usually indolent mind, and when he at length spoke, there was a hard, unpleasant tone in his voice. "No, I do not know, Bourrienne; I have never known a father's care or a mother's love."

"Indeed, Jean?" the other said in a gentler tone. "Then you have missed a great deal of the happiness that this life affords." The time, the scene, and the existing sad state of circumstances, seemed to break down a barrier of reserve, and to forge a bond of mutual sympathy between them.

"I had a good mother," continued Bourrienne; "she's been dead these ten years. Good Heavens, how the time flies! It seems but yesterday when, as a little youngster, I played about her knees, and yet nearly twenty years have gone by. Sometimes I wish my views upon men and things were as limited as they were in those days. Then life, with its pleasures and sorrows, its miseries and dissipations, was to me an unopened page. My highest aspiration was to succeed in piling my twenty-four blocks, one above the other, to the height of my frowsy little head, and then when the whole thing would sway and tremble, and finally fall with a crash to the floor, I would look up crying into my mother's face, to meet the look of sympathy that was sure to be there. 'Try again, Paul,' she would say, and I would set to work with renewed courage, confident of success in the end. Oh, those happy days, Maret! would that I could live them over again."

Bourrienne again lapsed into gloom, and they drove on in silence for many miles. They had left the city and suburbs far behind, and now emerged into the open country, where not a home or sign of human life was visible. The moon shone clear and pale from the dark azure of the Heavens, and showed the road stretching white before them. Save for the

clattering of the horses' hoofs on the stony ground, the silence was intense—unbroken.

Suddenly Bourrienne aroused himself, and shaking off his dejection with a marked effort, urged the horses onward. Notwithstanding the great distance they had already covered, the noble creatures, at the sound of a friendly voice, showed the mettle of which they were by springing lightly forward, their heads high, and their nostrils sniffing the fresh air of the country.

"Say, look out, old man! there's danger in running such a breakneck pace at night time on this lonely road. It's none of the best for day travelling, for the footing is insecure, and they say this part of the country abounds in bogs."

Bourriene took exception to these fears of his companion, by laughingly assuring him that old Collot's horses were as sure of foot as the mules of the Caucasus.

The wind, which had hitherto been but a light breeze, began to rise, and blowing light clouds across the surface of the moon, threw their path into alternate light and shade. At a point a few yards before them, the road left its direct course and took a sharp turn to the right, avoiding a precipitous bank bordering on a rocky plain. Both were unaware of this fact, until the horses, unwilling to follow the

dictates of the rein, when their sharpened senses detected danger ahead, began to rear and plunge. Bourrienne, springing forward in his seat, endeavored to pacify them. All might have been well, had not some small animal, frightened by the uproar, dashed across the road beneath the horses' feet. The affrighted creatures arose upon their haunches for an instant, and then plunged wildly forward. There was one fearful crash—then all was silent, save for the struggling of the animals, as they tried to extricate themselves from the wreck.

The moon emerging from behind a cloud, disclosed a woeful sight. By its pale rays, the form of a man was discernible stretched lifeless upon the rocks at the foot of the slope. The horses, having obtained their freedom, were gone, and the silence and solitude rendered the scene most weird and oppressive.

The awful stillness was at length broken by a deep groan, and a man slowly arose from the brush by the roadside, and made his way painfully down the slope. The moon shining full upon his face, as he emerged from the shadow, showed the livid features of Maret. One arm hung helpless at his side, and his clothing was torn and stained with blood. Reaching with difficulty the rocks at the foot of the decline, he looked about for his com-

panion, fearing the worst yet daring to hope that all might yet be well. Venturing to move forward amidst the debris, he almost stumbled across the lifeless body. Stooping quickly, with his left hand he opened the driving cloak and inner garments, and laying his ear upon the breast, waited for some sign of life.

"Dead! dead! merciful God! can it be possible?" he murmured, as he felt the icy hands and forehead, and shuddering, he looked about him for some means of assistance. No help seemed nigh Whether or not any habitation was near, he had no means of determining. No sound could be heard save the mournful wail of the wind across the open plain. Searching among the remains of the carriage, he found a rug and one of the travelling cases. The former, he spread upon the ground, and tenderly, but with difficulty because of the rapidly inflaming arm, laid Bourrienne's body upon it. Then opening the travelling case, he searched for a cordial, but nothing in the shape of a flask had survived the awful wreck. The contents of the case were in hopeless confusion, and Maret was obliged to give up the search and wait for what aid the dawning of day might bring. Seating himself upon a rock by the body, he gazed with tear-dimmed eyes upon the still, white face of young Bourrienne.

"Poor old Boury," he murmured; "can it be possible that it's all up with him now? He was a deuce of a good fellow when one was in a pinch—always obliging and ready to help a chap out of a scrape, and never mean enough to throw it up to him afterwards. By Jove, I'm all broken up over this," and his hand trembled as he clasped it over his forehead, which felt sick and giddy from pain and emotion.

Long he sat there in the chill of the early morning, his teeth chattering, and his limbs throbbing with pain and excitement. Occasionally he would lift his left hand and feel the heart and pulse of the form beside him, only to draw back in despair and sorrow.

"Poor chap, he had lots to live for—everything in fact—and yet he has been cut off in the midst of it all; while I, who have nothing, who have not even a name that I can call my own, am spared to continue a life of wretchedness and misery. What a strange thing fate is!"

The face of Jean Maret had assumed a hard, bitter expression, and his eyes no longer rested tenderly upon the man beside him. He seemed to be brooding over some unhappy past, some wretchedness that had left a lasting impression upon his mind. Suddenly he started as though a strange thought had

entered his mind, and springing to his feet with the words, "My God, not that!" began to pace the open space between the rocks.

"O why do these tempting voices ring in my ears, and bid me do that from which gratitude alone should deter me? Bah! I am a coward! This opportunity of raising myself to independence was thrown in my way purposely by Providence—I'll do it, so help me—Satan!"

Stooping over Bourrienne's body, he stripped it of its clothing, and substituted in its place his own bedraggled apparel. The change was about completed when signs of day began to show in the east. Climbing to the road, Maret looked anxiously about him. Far away to the westward, he could discern what appeared to be a small hamlet. If he could but reach it, and gain the assistance of the farmers to remove the body, all might yet be well; but as he endeavored to move forward in his weakened state, his trembling limbs refused their aid, and he sank down exhausted. For some minutes he lay trying to muster his failing energies, when he was aroused by a rumbling sound close at hand. Scarcely had he struggled to a standing position when a lumbering old cart appeared in view around the curve, drawn by an equally lumbering white horse, whose drooping head and tail and

unassuming gait impressed one with the idea that he was ashamed of his lowly occupation—that of carting produce to market—and was a true though humble exemplification of the words of the immortal bard, when he observed that we were creatures of our environments. The driver, a rosy-cheeked, good-natured looking farmer, drew up when he saw that Maret wished to speak to him, and asked what he could do.

"My friend and I were the victims of a fearful smashup here last night, and as a result he is lying dead in the glen yonder, while I am suffering from a badly sprained and inflamed arm, and I fear, internal injuries. Could I but gain your assistance to the nearest village where medical aid may be procured, you would lose nothing by your kindness, my good man."

The farmer, now white with horror, was already upon the ground, and together they returned for Bourrienne's body. "Poor boy, he was young to die, and in such a way," the old man said, as he stooped beside it. He felt the heart and tried to detect the faintest sign of respiration, but shook his head sadly and murmured, "Stone dead!"

Then he returned to the wagon and proceeded to divest it of its contents; all kinds of garden produce were spilled in a confused heap by the roadside—he would return for it

later he said, there were no thieves in those parts. Together, they carried the still form to the road, and placing it carefully upon the floor of the cart, with the rug beneath it, drove slowly on. Maret explained as much as he saw fit of the circumstances. He said that in his anxiety to reach his dying father's bedside, discretion had given place to haste, and he had urged the horses on to a reckless speed. He dwelt long and sadly upon the fate of his companion, and said that all due respect must be paid the remains.

"Mine is but a poor hut," replied the old man, "but such as it is, you are welcome. My good wife will tend and dress your wounds, while I will call upon the good man in the village, and see that the poor boy is taken care of."

"As far as he, poor fellow, is concerned," replied Maret, "I shall accept your kindness, but I must proceed. I fear even now that my father may be beyond all earthly help, but while there yet remains a hope that he is still alive, I must hasten to his bedside."

Had the old man looked into the face beside him, he would have been startled by its death-like pallor. Young Maret was playing a gruesome game. A complete transformation had taken place; the cold, conservative young fellow who had been Paul de Bourrienne's

room-mate, no longer existed—another man lived in his place. What love he had held for the friend who had been kind to him, was buried in one great purpose—that of gaining a name and independence. The fact that he had no definite knowledge of his parentage had rendered his nature that of a pessimist and a cynic, but until now he had entertained no thought of gaining by illicit means, a name to take the place of that of which he was ignorant. Some demon whispered the thought in his ear as he bent over the prostrate form, and though at first he had repelled it with horror, the persuasive arguments of the fiend at length performed their evil work, and Jean Maret, the needy, dependent student, resolved to be dependent no longer. Everything was in his favor; old Bourrienne would soon be dead if he was not so already; the lawyer and servants at Pierrepont had not seen Paul since he was a child; besides, there was a certain resemblance between them which would facilitate the fraud; then all papers and effects of Bourrienne were at his disposal—why, he could establish beyond a doubt that he was heir to Philippe de Bourrienne's estate. That proven, his future was secured. He need not return to Paris, where young Bourrienne was well known, but could cross to England and begin life anew. Ah! he could

see his future existence stretching out before him as clearly as a written page. No more scruples of family, no more trials, no more cringing—he would be upon a par with respectable men and women.

As they drew near the humble, but no less happy cot of the farmer, Maret placed money in his hand, and bade him keep what was left after Bourrienne's body had been properly cared for. It was a goodly sum, for the latter had but just drawn his quarterly allowance, and the amount had been intact upon his person when the accident occurred. "Discard that clothing he wears and have him buried in something like my own," he said as a sharp twinge of conscience disturbed him. "Could I remain, I should do so, but filial duty calls me elsewhere, so I must confide all to the care of you and your good wife." Lifting the sheet which the frightened woman had thrown over the body when they entered, he gazed long and silently at the face beneath. A fearful tumult was raging in his breast. Affection and gratitude, pride and ambition were warring for mastery there; and for a moment, it seemed that the better nature would prevail. A tear fell from beneath the lowered eyelids upon the cold white forehead, but brushing away another that was about to follow, he replaced the shroud with a gesture of angry fierceness and turned away.

CHAPTER V.

PHILIPPE DE BOURRIENNE.

"Do you think it will fetch the scape-grace, Du Maurier?"

"The Lord only knows, Philippe. I have jostled my wits, wasted my energies, and called my profession into play, in the hope of evoking a spark of filial emotion in the breast of that boy of yours, but all to no avail. It's damnable! Philippe, ay damnable, to have to employ measures like these; but to my mind it will teach the lad a lesson, and he will profit well by the scare. He's a selfish dog, Bourrienne."

"There, there, Lucien! be not too hard upon the boy. We are all selfish beings. The main-spring of man's existence is self. There is no creature upon God's earth, but whose scope and aim in this life would prove to be selfish ambition, were his soul sifted to the very dregs. The philanthropist is selfish! He gives, because it gives him pleasure to give. Take that pleasure away from his peculiarly constructed being, and he no longer sees the needs of others. The lover is selfish,

Du Maurier—he loves his lady, but he loves self more, in that he bestows his affections upon her, not because it pleases her but because it gratifies his own narrowly biased soul. Ay, Lucien, we are any one of us as selfish as the miser who hoards his gains, did we but read ourselves aright. But the boy—I wonder—I wonder if he will be very much affected by the news. Did you say I was dead, Du Maurier?"

"No, dying; I called it a stroke. If he fails us this time, egad, Bourrienne, he's a most unnatural son."

The other started, and a faint crimson began to show beneath the sallow skin. "Do you know, Du Maurier," he said quickly, "sometimes I have thought—perhaps it was imagination on my part—that he did not care a great deal for me."

"You mean when he was a child; yes, I have noticed that," replied the other bluntly.

A shade passed over the first speaker's face, and placing his elbows upon the table, he rested his lean, clean-shaven jaws upon his hands. He gazed moodily through the open window at the peaceful, agrestic scene beyond. Miles upon miles of uncultivated park land met his eye, skirted in the distance by hazy, bluish hills and forests of ever-changing green, now dark and indistinct in the approaching night;

and far away to the left, the little village of Pierrepont reared its one white spire against the cloudy sky. In the field below in the hollow, robust, brown-skinned farm hands were busily at work, covering the hay-cocks, for the new moon's corners had dipped ominously that month, and security for their crop meant the conjoint labor of night and day. The crickets chirped upon the lawn; the mournful croak of the frog echoed from the meadow ditches; the fire-flies flitted about in the shadowy shrubbery —but Philippe de Bourrienne neither saw nor heard these things. Another scene was before him—vivid, unchanging, real—bringing in its wake a thousand recollections long since buried.

He saw a little child with wavy, curling hair, and dark gray eyes, looking up at him with a puzzled, half-shy expression upon its babyish features; and beside it, her gaze bent tenderly, proudly upon the sturdy little form, stood a woman—a woman with a Saxon face and eyes like the child's—large and gray, and honest. Strange ideas were surging through his brain, and the dreamer clasped his claw-like hands about his forehead, as if to hold the wandering thoughts in check.

His was a strange, an unusual face; sharp and sallow, stern and unbending; the face of the French aristocrat, with its attenuated fea-

tures and heavy, overhanging brows; the sunken jaws, lack-lustre eyes, and melancholy mouth, seeming to denote a life blasted ere its course was run; a face made aged, not with years, but with the unfullfilment of a thousand dreams, a thousand hopes, a thousand aspirations—a face with a past, a history. The straight black hair, prematurely streaked with gray, hung listlessly about the lowering forehead, enhancing its dejection and sullen gloom, but lending a dreary, sad attractiveness to the emaciated features and drooping head. In that stern, saturnine countenance, not a single trait or line of beauty was displayed, yet not a woman in a thousand, upon beholding it, but who would murmur "a handsome face," and not a man, but who would turn to look again. Perhaps it was the hawk-like features and sullen brow, the sallow skin and raven locks; perhaps it was the beardless mouth, and sunken jaw, that attracted the common eye; and perhaps it was something else—something behind that melancholy mask, that striking brow; something shadowy, subtle, undefined. Be that as it may—Philippe de Bourrienne's was an unusual face.

Slowly turning his heavy eyes from the window, he let them rest upon a bronze clock upon the mantel. "A quarter of eight, Du Maurier," he said.

Du Maurier made no reply, nor did he turn and glance at the clock, as any nine men out of ten would have done. That would have been far too commonplace a movement for so uncommonplace a man as Lucien Du Maurier. He merely stroked his chin reflectively, and said nothing. Lawyers in general, and French ones in particular, possess a lamentable faculty for indulging in superfluities of speech, facial expression, and bodily contortion. Du Maurier was a delightful exception. He strenuously waived all conventionalities; never shrugged his shoulders or gesticulated with his hands; smiled but rarely, and seldom talked if silence would fill the bill. Perhaps he harbored the sentiments of the misanthropic, viewing life as a profitless existence, man as a worthless, inferior piece of mechanism; certain it was that Du Maurier presented a most unattractive personality to the world; and yet, beneath that sour, forbidding exterior, perhaps some kindlier trait lay hidden, perhaps some deeper, warmer sentiments lodged. Misanthropic or cynic, pessimist or erratic. there was at least one creature upon God's earth whom he regarded with respect and admiration, one creature whom he all but worshipped, and that was the silent, dejected man before him. Friends from boyhood, their paths in life had been intimately associated—the one richly en-

dowed with worldly goods, the other depending upon his wits for sustenance; the one the generous benefactor, the other the friend and adviser.

Du Maurier was a little man, with a wizened, expressionless face and grizzly hair, displaying a decidedly reddish tinge at the roots, and standing erect from the small, ferret-shaped head, like a field of young rye. Upon his nose was perched a pair of steel-bowed spectacles, through which two very small, bead-like eyes peeped forth. In quality his dress was superior to that of the ordinary solicitor, but noticeably lacking in neatness and attention to detail; the linen was crumpled, and generously bespattered with ink-spots; the necktie swerved to one side, and the coat and trousers stood greatly in need of the services of a whisk-broom.

"Bourrienne," he said abruptly, after a few moments' silence, "how old is the boy?"

"Twenty-four on the tenth of next month."

"Quite a chap, then, quite a chap; I was thinking he was younger. The years fly around like cog wheels. It does not seem so very long now, does it, since the day we stood upon the terrace out yonder, and saw him send the widow Fouché's boy home with a bloody nose and a swollen head?" and at the recollection, the little man relaxed his thin lips for

just the merest fraction of an inch, displaying a ragged row of irregular, discolored teeth.

The other smiled—a melancholy, ghostly smile, which well became the quiet, stolid face and gloomy mien. "Do you know, Du Maurier," he said, "I feel nervous about meeting the boy, actually nervous," and he shifted uneasily in his chair, and again glanced furtively at the clock.

Du Maurier looked scrutinizingly through his spectacles at the haggard face, and there was a worried expression in his bead-like eyes; but, schooled to the concealment of every emotion, his voice betrayed neither surprise nor perplexity. "H'm, not strange—not strange, Philippe; should advise you to get a little rest. If I mistake not, you were up half the night; a bad plan, an exceedingly bad plan," and the little man arose nimbly to his feet and moved toward the door.

"How long did you say before he would reach here?" asked his companion.

"In another hour, perhaps an hour and three minutes. An express passes through Pierrepont at nine-fifteen. I gave Pierre orders to meet it. I go to look over those deeds now; if you want me, call."

The door closed softly, and Philippe de Bourrienne was alone. For a few moments he sat motionless, his bent head still resting

upon his hands; then he slowly raised it and looked about him. "Another hour," he repeated; "Lucien said another hour. Can I be dreaming, or is it true that at last after all these years the day has come, the moment almost, when we will stand face to face, eye to eye, and looking into each other's souls, will read the several lessons that the past has imprinted there. In mine he will read weakness, folly, cowardice, degradation, infamy, deceit! And in his, I shall see naught but honor, integrity, fearlessness and pride, for he is her child, and in her pure soul were all these qualities combined. His eye will meet mine steadily, unflinchingly, for he has nothing to hide; but mine, wavering and cowardly, will drop before his boyish gaze. What will he be like, I wonder? Calm and quiet, gentle and amiable, like her? or proud and imperious, fiery and hot-headed, like another young Frenchman I used to know in days gone by? Will he grasp my hand warmly and affectionately, and look into my eyes with tears in his own, or will those eyes meet mine with a suspicious, searching glance, and will a feeling of instinctive aversion lead him to pause ere he grasps a father's proffered hand? Bah, Bourrienne! your mind rambles —you are not the man you used to be; brace your drooping energies and meet him

like a man. You have stooped to strategy to bring him to your side, and it is too late now to falter. Tell him everything; let him hear the story from your lips and not from the fiendish tongues of scandal-mongers. You have suffered—he will suffer—it is all in a lifetime. He knows that man is not infallible, that we are all bound to err, and he will hear the story quietly, calmly, neither abusing nor reproaching, for he is her son, and she lived but to forgive and forget. Yes, he is her son, and should possess her traits; yet what if he is like me—like what I was—defiant, revengeful and unforgiving—what then?"

With a gesture of despair the moody dreamer arose and stepped through the low window upon the terrace beyond, and there pacing up and down in the silent night, tried to shut eyes and ears to the painful scene which his misapprehensions had conjured up. Curses, loud and violent, raged in his ears, and they were meant for him; he saw a youth white with sorrow and amazement, anger and contempt, and he was the wretched object of it all. Merciful God! could he live to meet a son's contumely?

The voices of the farm hands sounded clearly and cheerily upon the balmy night. Bourrienne turned his eyes slowly toward the

hay-field, where the white shirts of the men were faintly visible, as they flitted quickly about, anxious to have their task completed and the hay safe ere the village clock should have told the hour of nine.

"Not one of those poor devils," he murmured, "but whose soul is filled with envy of me and my estate—me—as miserable a wretch as ever trod God's earth; not one but looks upon me as a favorite of fortune, and yet I am naught but fortune's fool; not one but who would sell his soul to stand in my place, and yet gladly would I give my all to enjoy the peace of mind that the humblest among those youths possesses. But no, I must needs live in grinding torture for the rest of my days, while others, less fortunately endowed with worldly goods, are able to pass through life without knowing a sorrow or a regret. Good God! will the sight of that boy's face never leave me?"

His hand moved slowly to his breast, but fell again almost immediately, and shuddering, Bourrienne glanced about him.

"Why not? why not?" he whispered. "Theosophy teaches that when we destroy the body we mutilate the soul; and then again, is not the soul of a renegade past mutilation? Has not mine passed through the slaughter-house long ere this? It had passed through

twenty slaughter-houses, if curses could slaughter souls, for have not I cursed the very breath I draw?"

Again his hand was raised, and this time he drew forth a small, glittering object, and gazed upon it with a strange, far-away look in his eyes. "Oh, for the courage to end it all! Would for a moment I could become the proselyte of unbelievers and say, 'There is no God!' I but leap from misery and pain, to darkness, void, and black forgetfulness! Oh, worldly care, thou cradle of atheism, many the poor, weak, down-trodden wretch who has been led by thy oppression to forswear his God, and rush unbidden into the eternity beyond. Would that I could become one of these and end it all. But no; though I would fain make this little weapon a pledge of amity between the world and me, a sycophant-like voice within bids me live and face it all; it whispers that my soul is defaced, not mutilated, denigrated, not destroyed—bah! it is a plausible whisper, but it cannot deceive me. The past is irreclaimable, the future a blazing hell, and if I live I but jeopardize reason itself. Nay, I should strike and rid the world of a worthless blot. A momentary pang, and all is oblivion. They would find me here to-morrow, cold and stiff, and would be appalled by the, to them, uncalled-for deed. They would discuss my

past career over my rigid corpse, but I would be deaf to everything. The wiseacres would say, 'It is predestination—God so willed it, that he should die by his own hand.' The optimists would murmur, 'Whatever is, is right,' and the scandal lovers would shrug their shoulders and say, 'Every deed has a motive —there is something shady in his past.' Then *he* would come—but instead of meeting with a father's blessing, he would be brought face to face with senseless clay; instead of hearing from my lips the tale of a wasted life, he must hear it from the lips of strangers. Perhaps such tragic reparation for the blot I have placed upon his young life would cause him to think less hardly of my deeds—perhaps he would kneel beside me, and wet the wound with his tears. Ah, Bourrienne, 'twould be the better way—the better way. I may profane the laws of moral philosophy—repudiate the word of God—but what is it all worth to me? On the one hand, shame, humiliation, reproaches, curses; a rayless existence; and on the other, a whirpool of oblivion and darkness, or a writhing hell—I wonder which? Bah! this is the rhapsody of a rambling mind! Brace yourself—think calmly, clearly—why let these lurking, cowardly fears of horrors to come, render your arm impotent and your purpose weak? 'Twill be but the agony of a moment

—there is nothing to fear beyond. What evidence have you of the existence of divinity or devil? Are you a dogmatist, that you believe against all sense and reason? Seek not to dissemble with your own soul, but strike and end it all. 'Tis but the dereliction of the flesh for peace and freedom from worldly oppression; relinquish secular thoughts—think not of the past, nor of the future—live but for a moment in the present, then all is ended. Strike, fool! there is no God, for gods do not deal in the tortures of hell."

The night breeze seemed to take up the desperate cry, "There is no God! There is no God!" The crickets chirped it; 'twas the song of the frogs in the field below, "There is no God! There is no God!"

Suddenly a white glow burst upon the fields around, and the moon, the queen of the universe, surrounded by her pageant of a million stars, sailed proudly out into the open sky.

Philippe de Bourrienne cowered back. One hand clutched the disheveled locks, the other was held high above his head, the moonbeams reflected back by the glitter of the steel. The sunken jaws had relaxed, and the saturnine mouth was distorted in a hideous smile. A thundering, roaring, rolling sound was surging in his ears—the Heavens were speaking, and for him alone. From end to end of the broad

expanse, from star to moon and from moon to star, came the single cry, "There is a God! Great, Glorious, Sublime, and Infinite! Stay thy hand, infidel—Dogma is dead!"

With the shrieking laugh of a demon, Bourrienne threw back his head. "There is a God, but He is not for me. Satan,thou king of devils, *thou* art my consignee!"

A shot rang out on the quiet night, startling the birds in their downy nests, and evoking a short, sharp bark from the huge mastiff chained in the stable-yard below. The men in the hay-field paused for a moment in their work to look questioningly into each other's faces. "Poaching along the river lot again. Darby may as well take down those signs; they'll respect no law at Pierrepont."

"I could have sworn that it came from the house, Alphonse; but then, there has been a strange echo in the wind ever since the night old Mam'selle set fire to her hut down yonder, and ran shrieking to the sea. Mon Dieu! that was a weird night along the Pierrepont," and with a gesture indicative of horror, he turned and cut deep into the waving grass.

The crickets still chirped upon the sloping lawn; the voice of the frogs still echoed from the meadow trenches, but their noisy croak had become a mournful, weary dirge; the wind, like a wailing Banshee, arose with a

moan of terror along the river bank and sighed fitfully through the branches of the larch trees; and the moon, shuddering at the ghastly sight, withdrew behind a bank of clouds.

In his study, at the rear of the hall, Lucien Du Maurier, his wizened face the color of death, and his small, thin frame shuddering like an aspen, stood and awaited for he knew not what. Then, like a drunken man, or one who walks in sleep, he staggered to the table and, taking up a night-lamp, moved slowly toward the door. The chimney rattled against the burner in his hand, and his body swayed from side to side of the long hall as he advanced, murmuring in an uncanny, trembling whisper, "It's come, it's come; and whatever it was, it has died with him."

Pausing before the library door, he placed his shaking hand upon the knob, and then glanced shudderingly behind him toward the room he had left. A cowardly fear was at his heart—a fear born of horrifying forebodings, and Lucien Du Maurier's soul was filled with a superstitious dread. "Philippe! Philippe!" he called, and he listened to his own voice with a peculiar intentness, as it echoed up the winding stairway and along the darkened hall. Then slowly, with the lamp held high above his head, he turned the knob and peered

within. For a moment, a sudden hope was born within him, for in that shadowy room all was as he had left it, save that its gloomy occupant had vanished.

He entered, moved across the floor, and looked out upon the terrace. "Philippe!" he called again. But the rustling of the night wind through the ivy leaves was his only answer, and his soul grew dark with fear. Retracing his steps he held the lamp close to the face of the mantel clock. "Half-past nine," he said. "Young Bourrienne should be here by now. Perhaps Philippe has gone out into the grounds to meet him; he was always fidgety and impatient where that boy was concerned. But the shot! Ah, bah! Lucien Du Maurier a coward! Ha, ha!" He would tell Philippe the crazy notion that had taken root in his brain that night, and the latter would smile that slow, dreamy smile of his and say, "Thou art losing thy grit, Du Maurier. Whence these carping, womanish fears, these unhealthy suspicions? I credited thee with more moral strength, my friend."

Then he turned, and with a ghastly smile stepped through the open window into the darkness without. He knew what sight was to meet him there; he knew whose form lay there extended, the face turned upward toward the stars; he knew whose hand had fired that

shot, and he had known when he lifted the night-lamp and staggered along the gloomy hall. No cry of horror or amazement escaped his lips, no frightened, frenzied appeal to God, no wild and violent outburst of pity; he merely knelt by the ghastly form, and wept long and silently—tears that a child might weep over a lost or broken toy, tears that man weeps over a shattered idol, a bleeding martyr or a persecuted friend; then he stooped and touched the cold, white forehead with his lips, as one in reverence salutes some sacred object, "Poor Philippe," he murmured, "what secret, grinding sorrow has dragged thee down to this?"

Some one was moving within the house, and going to the window Du Maurier called softly, "Pierre."

"Is that you, M. Du Maurier?"

"Yes. Come out here, I want you."

An old, white-haired servant, with stooping shoulders and wrinkled face, thrust his head out and looked doubtfully along the terrace. "Where are you, sir? Did you hear a shot a moment since?"

"I'm here by the steps. Come out."

With a hasty gesture Du Maurier silenced the old man's cry of alarm as he came forward. "Not a word of this to anyone to-night, Pierre. He is dead; I have tested the heart.

Take the shoulders, and we will lift him into the library; then we must wait for the boy."

Pitifully affected, but uttering no word, the old servant stooped and lifted the shattered head. They laid him gently down upon the hearth-rug, the rapidly congealing blood from his wound sullying the marble of the fire-place with its dull crimson stain.

"You may call your wife, Pierre. Tell her to prepare a bed here." He knelt and unfastened the dead man's vest and necktie.

"Should we not inform the gendarmes?" ventured the servant in a husky voice.

"Hang the gendarmes! Can they bring him back to life?"

"But would it not save trouble in the future, Monsieur? Does not the law forbid one to remove the body of a murdered man or a—a—suicide ere the gendarmes have visited the spot?"

"Who said anything about suicide, fool? Go, do as I bade you."

Pierre Favre slowly obeyed, but there was a scared, reluctant look upon his face, and his old rheumatic knees shook visibly as he walked away. The lawyer had arisen and moved toward the light. In his hand he held a long, sealed envelope stained in places with blood. The name Du Maurier was written across it in the dead man's hand.

On the morrow they laid him in state in a reception-room of the old mansion, to await the coming of young Bourrienne. Servants in deep mourning passed to and fro with subdued voices and muffled foot-falls. Perhaps Philippe de Bourrienne had never won their love, but they gave him the respect due to an indifferent though not unkind master. Besides, death brings in its wake a feeling of awe which fetters the boisterous tongue, and causes even the most thoughtless to assume a rôle of quiet and decorum.

When the third day after Philippe de Bourrienne's death had arrived and no word had been received from Paul, Du Maurier sent his second message to Paris. The answer which came after several hours' delay, ran thus:

"Bourrienne and friend left Paris upon the night of the fifth; nothing has been heard of him since."

One day longer the heavy casket with its silent occupant remained in the reception hall; then Philippe de Bourrienne's body was carried to the grave.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARS OF MALCONTENTS.

"NOW speak the truth, Lucile. Does anything pleasant or interesting ever happen to you or me in this dreary place?"

"Hush, Gene, you are not yourself to-day, or you would not be so out of sorts. This hot weather has affected your nerves. Do try and cheer up. It will be cooler to-morrow, and we will walk as far as Dantzic and back, and then have a late dinner with Madame Teignot."

"Walk to Dantzic and back, and then have dinner with Madame Teignot? How exciting! how intensely interesting! Lucile, you greatly amuse me with your humdrum way of looking at things. I tell you I am tired of it all. Here we are cooped up in this lonely old house from one year's end to the next, with no change, no excitement, no pleasures. A glimpse of a strange face would be a godsend. Oh, how I long to see the world, to mix with its people and become a part of them. You are different; you lack ambition and, like a young robin fearing to try its wings, shrink

back within the shelter of your nest, content with one fleeting glance at the great universe, and willing, with your books and embroideries, to cuddle up close to the fire and let the outside world go on as it will. God did not endow us with intellects and the faculty of enjoying life, to have us deprived of every blessing in the form of congenial companions and occupations. He intended us for social beings, not creatures of solitude. Did He give us speech that we should hoard up our sentiments and opinions and never let them see the light of day? Did He endow us with sight, hearing and other social senses, that we should spend our days gazing upon the gloomy walls of an old country-house, hearing no voices but those of the few commonplace inmates, whose ideas and aspirations soar no higher than their daily meal or their country pastor's last sermon? I tell you, Lucile, I am tired of it all. I would go out into the world and lead a life of dazzling excitement, a life that would be a life; one in which the weeks would fly by like hours, and the hours like minutes. Oh, for a change from this dreary monotony!"

The speaker, a tall, dark-eyed and rather handsome girl, paced the floor excitedly, as with indignant voice and flashing eyes she bemoaned the fate that separated them from the

world and its pleasures. At intervals she stopped at the window, and with frowning brow gazed out upon the uninviting landscape, as if in some measure she blamed the rain which beat heavily against the panes, for her trials and tribulations.

Her companion, a quiet-looking, brown-haired, blue-eyed girl, tried with gentle persuasion and arguments to pacify her. "Cicero says, Gene, that to live long, one must live slowly. You would plunge into a whirl of such gaiety and pleasure that the flight of time would be unnoticed, and the days would pass on their way without your having accomplished one good or useful thing. As for my part, I am satisfied with our quiet, happy life here, and would ask for no better. I have my books, and from them I learn all I care to know of outside matters for the present."

"Yes, you have your books; you read, you study; the history of nearly every nation is a familiar story to you; you can quote with surprising accuracy from the profoundest works of Milton, Shakespere and Byron; even those horrid Latin things, that I could not to save me even pronounce the names of, are an open page to you; and yet with these accomplishments, you are content to remain here in obscurity. Have you no desire to converse with people of superior intellects? Have you no ambition?"

"Cæsar was ambitious." laughed the other; and tossing her work into the basket, she joined her sister at the window. "Come, Gene, let us practise a while before lunch. My fingers are getting stiff and awkward for want of exercise."

But the older girl, worked up to her theme, was not to be laughed into good nature by her companion's light sallies. "Besides," she said, blushing slightly, "we may marry some time."

Her companion threw back her head and laughed long and loudly. "Why, Gene, you are but eighteen and——"

At this moment the door opened, and a white-haired, sallow-faced little woman entered. There seemed to be a suppressed excitement in her manner as she addressed the girls. Such a strange thing happened, she said. A frightful accident had occurred on the road to Versailles the night before. A young man accompanied by his friend was driving from Paris at a rapid pace in order to reach the bedside of his dying father. At a short distance from their village the horses, startled by some object, had become unmanageable, and the carriage had been precipitated over a steep bank.

"O, dear, dear! and were they badly hurt?"

"Alas, yes; one was killed outright, and the body has been taken in charge by some good farmers near Dantzic, while the other, although he has sustained rather serious injuries, I fear, endeavored to make his way onward on foot, for fear that his poor father would die ere he reached him. Was it not courageous upon his part? Poor, poor boy! When near here, he was overcome by faintness and fatigue, and has solicited our hospitality for a few days. I bade him enter and partake of the best the old place could afford. Marianne is preparing a room for him; meanwhile I gave him a glass of wine and bade him rest upon the couch in the dining-room. You, Lucile, I shall want to assist me in making bandages and poultices; and Gene, wrap up well and hurry to Dantzic, and bring Dr. Peletier back with you."

The two girls, cheered by the prospect of a little variation and excitement in the dull routine of their lives, and pleased to apply their active minds to any useful occupation, prepared at once for the separate duties apportioned them, and Madame Teignot bustled back to attend their disabled guest. Her large heart was ever on the alert for such offices of benevolence, and her busy little brain was as much excited over this unexpected intrusion upon their solitude as were those of the two girls.

For years Madame Teignot had acted the part of mother to Lucile and Gene de Caulaincourt, for their own mother had died when they were scarcely more than infants, and their father, once an honorable member of the Chamber of Deputies, had for the last ten years been mouldering in a six-foot plot of ground within the gloomy portals of Neuilly. He had been fairly rich in his day, honored and respected by a score or so of interested friends, and had stood well among the political lights of Paris; but he could not take his pomp with him, and in this case neither could he leave it behind; for a few weeks after his own decease, his political fame also died a very natural death, and snarling creditors rushed in to gather up all that remained of his other worldly possessions.

A distant relative of Madame de Caulaincourt offered to pay one-fourth of the amount necessary for the support of the little orphans, if a few of the other distant relatives clubbed together for the remaining three-fourths. To this, after a great deal of wrangling and backbiting, they consented, and Lucile and Gene were consigned to that invariably last resource, when funds are scarce and young ladies to be disposed of—a "fashionable school for girls." In this institute, in a gloomy outskirt of Paris, a place of rigid discipline, insufficient food and

scanty clothing (the few frocks they had carried with them having been carefully stowed away in the private boxes of "Madame l'Institutrice," being considered by that sharp-featured, goggle-eyed individual, far to worldly for such a Godlike place as hers), the two children developed into sallow, unattractive little creatures, with pinched faces and large, haggard eyes. Seldom, if ever, was the happy, laugh of childhood or a babyish expression heard from their thin lips. No one petted or cared for them; they were obliged to shift for themselves, thankful that they had a roof to cover them and kind instructors to chastise them when they transgressed.

Gene, inheriting from some aristocratic ancestor a proud, defiant spirit and a sulky, indomitable will, often rebelled against the dog's life they were forced to lead, only to meet with a taunting reproof or the sharp sting of the lash. Embittered by treatment so harsh, her nature, originally docile and placable, became sullen and unmanageable; but seeing that resistance was useless, she settled down into the weary round of work and ill-treatment, looking upon life as a responsibility, a burden. Had she been alone, it would have been at least endurable; she could stand the lash, the stinging reproof, for herself, but the little sister, for whom in her childish way she

felt a motherly responsibility, was weak and unfit for hardships such as these. With her little hands clinched and her breath coming with painful rapidity, Gene would look on while some arrogant instructress chastised the tiny frame for knowledge that the improperly nourished little brain refused to give, and would long to hurl with all her infantile strength some deadly object at the creature who in her eyes seemed scarcely better than an assassin.

Often in the quiet hours of the night she would creep from her bed, and, taking stealthily from its hiding place a hardened roll or scrap of dried meat, snatched from the public table when all eyes were supposed to be closed in prayer, she would press it into the little sister's hand, bidding her eat, as there was plenty more for herself. She was weary of her little existence, and yet she did not wish to die; for if hse died, what would become of the little Lucile? Who would watch over her, and take her punishment by confessing to be the guilty one when any disobedience was discovered?

These were the unchildlike thoughts that took root and grew in the mind of little Gene de Caulaincourt, sown there by irate instructors and fostered by unkindness and misery. These were the trials and abuses that trans-

formed the happy laugh of childhood into the sullen sneer of defiance and distrust.

Once she escaped from the dingy building, and wandering bare-headed through the streets of Paris, besought the passers-by to go and rescue the little Lucile; but the gendarmes took her in charge and she was carried back.

Then Madame Teignot, their father's half-sister, came, and they were taken to her home upon the outskirts of Versailles. Madame was not rich, but she had a comfortable house and a kind heart, and being a widow and childless, she welcomed the companionship of youth.

Le Métairie, as Madame Teignot called it, was a rambling, ivy-covered house of red brick, built in the old Gothic style of architecture, with pointed gables and quaint little latticed windows. The interior had been massive and rich in its day, but the high walls and darkly-polished stairways of Norway oak had begun to show signs of age and decay. Small wonder, for if the tales of the country people in those parts were true, the old house could trace its existence back to the time of the Bourbons, whose ill-fated queen had once been refreshed by a glass of milk in its hospitable porch, while travelling through the then scantily settled district of Dantzic.

Le Métairie was not Madame's ancestral home, for the kind-hearted little old lady

could boast no select genealogical tree. Her grandfather, 'twas true, had been a Chevreuse, she prided herself upon that, and had purchased the place for a shockingly large amount of *louis d'or* from a real marquis, back in the days of the First Consul; and Madame never tired of telling the story of her distinguished relative's encounter with celebrity.

"It was during the time of the dispute over the Treaty of Amiens," she would say, "when all France was disturbed by fears of English intrusion, that my grandsire first came to live at Le Métairie; and though he was as brave a man as there was in all France in those days, he kept his doors locked and his windows barricaded both night and day. One night, as he was lying awake upon his bed in an upper chamber, the sound of galloping horsemen reached his ears. Springing up, he raised a window and peered through the heavy shutters, just in time to see a small cavalcade draw up at the house. One of the soldiers dismounted, and climbing over the box hedge knocked loudly at the door. Alarmed lest they should prove to be a party of the enemy, my grandsire made no response, but kept very still and listened. In a few moments he heard the man at the door call to the others in French, and, feeling slightly reassured, he pushed open the iron shutters and looked out.

"'What dost thou want, friend, at this hour of the night?' he asked.

"'We are French soldiers, my good man, and seek your hospitality in the name of the Consul.'

"In those days, to deny a party of soldiers one's hospitality meant the bombardment of house and inmates; so my grandsire, having unfastened the door, lighted a candle, and led the way to the old kitchen out yonder, where they gathered around the fire-place and devoured bread and cheese, and cold *écrevisse*, as though they had not seen food for a fortnight. And one of their number, a stocky, thick-set fellow, muffled to the eyes in a surtout, asked for wine; and when it was set before him, bade my grandsire sit down and break bread with him. Had he lived long in that neighborhood, he asked, and what were his views upon the present civil and military affairs of his nation? My grandsire answered him, saying that he was but a countryman, and that his knowledge of affairs at Paris and in Italy was but an indifferent one, as it was all gained by hearsay.

"And the rest of the people thereabout, did they seem to favor the Consular government?

"Ay, the country people favored anything, when told it was for their own good.

"And he, himself, what did he think of this First Consul? Was he not an inimitable man?

"My grandsire had been imbibing freely of the wine, and his tongue had gradually begun to loosen. Ay, the Consul was an inimitable man, there was no denying that; but he, Jean Chevreuse, had no use for him whatever. To be sure, the country was going wild over Bonaparte, but then the French, from the time of Julius Cæsar, had always been like a flock of sheep, ready to stampede the moment a leader presented himself. 'Twas true, he was the greatest general the world had ever known, but that did not mitigate in the least his personal qualities, which were most deplorable. He was as hard and unbending as the oak that grew beside the house door, and as heartless as the stone couriers at the gates of the Tuileries. Sure if his, Jean Chevreuse's, life was at stake, and the question of mercy rested between the devil and Napoleon, he would invariably turn to the devil.

"The soldiers all looked intensely grave at this assertion of my grandsire's, but the man at the table laughed heartily, and setting down his wine-glass, arose and moved toward the fire. For several moments he stood gazing at the embers, his head bowed and his arms folded across his breast; then turning to a tall, slim man near the door, he said, 'It is time we were moving on, Lefebvre.' And they gathered up their belongings and moved toward

the hall. My grandsire accompanied them, and looked on while they prepared their horses for the journey. The man in the surtout was the last to mount, and as he rode his horse alongside the porch, he leaned from the saddle and said to my grandsire in a low tone, 'Thou shouldst make a good citizen, friend, for thou speakest thy mind.'

"Then he raised the hat which had concealed his features, allowing the light to fall full upon his face as he rode away. The candle fell from my grandsire's hand and his limbs grew slack beneath him. Mon Dieu! it was Bonaparte!" and Madame would raise her hands in mimic horror as she added this *coup de grâce.*

In Lucile's eyes the old place seemed no less than a forsaken palace of the bygone ages. She loved her home, and with the light-heartedness of youth forgot her past sorrows in her enjoyment of the present.

The spacious dining-hall, with its great fireplace guarded by immense bronze andirons, now black with age, was her especial delight. She loved to spend hours in the roomy old kitchen, with its brick floor and deep chimney-corner, where, no doubt, ages ago, some young girl like herself had sat and watched the huge logs blaze about the ingle. She liked to assist old Marianne, the woman who cooked and

washed and sewed for them, in polishing the copper receptacles which were arranged with studied symmetry along the walls. The chambers above seemed like so many fairy bowers to her. It is true, the furnishings were old and worn, but compared to "Madame l'Institutrice's" attic, with its one corner partitioned off for a bed, they were indeed delightful retreats. She loved to wake in the summer mornings and, pushing back the ivy from the old-fashioned windows, look out upon the valley below, through which a winding country road led to Versailles, five miles away.

Lucile was happy; she asked for nothing better. Not so Gene. After her dreary life at school, the old place did indeed seem a haven of rest to her, but as the years passed by, she wearied of its loneliness. She had read books of travel and books of the social life of the great cities, and with a nature ever thirsting for adventure, she longed to break through her seeming captivity and fly forth into that region of pleasure and gaiety which she knew must mean life.

CHAPTER VII.

AT LE MÉTAIRIE.

WITH sparkling eyes and cheeks flushed by her long walk, Gene hurried across the lawn and in at the great door of Le Métairie. She had walked the two miles to the village, and had run most of the way back. Dr. Peletier had had some patient to attend to who would detain him twenty minutes or so, and offering Gene a chair, he had asked her to wait for him. But a walk home through the damp, sweet-scented woods held far more attraction for the girl than the conversation of *Monsieur le docteur*, which always seemed to her redolent of pills and snuff; and besides, his old white horse was such an ambling, lackadaisical creature that, to a young girl like Gene, whose robust health called for constant activity, a drive home behind him would have been scarcely less than torture. She remembered once driving back with the funny little doctor, when Lucile had fallen and hurt her arm; and she recalled distinctly an almost ungovernable inclination to jump out and run along beside

the aggravating quadruped, to see if the spirit of competition would spur him into anything like a trot.

As she entered the hall, the first object that met her glance was a long driving-coat thrown carelessly across one of the chairs. It looked rather dilapidated and soiled, but the richness of the fabric and the fashionable cut of the garment pleased her fastidious eye; and lifting it from the chair Gene put it on and surveyed herself in the mirror. The dampness without had caused her hair to curl in little ringlets about her dark, almost gypsy-like face, and as she stripped her white teeth to smile at the rather awkward form in the mirror, she made a strikingly pretty picture.

"A young aristocrat, no doubt," she said aloud. "I wonder if he is handsome, and whether he will fall in love with Lucile or me. He must be very fashionable and wealthy to wear anything like this."

Turning to replace the coat where she had found it, she came face to face with him who her first startled glance told her must be the subject of her present thoughts, and the owner of the property upon which she was trespassing. Had he heard what she had said? Blushing to the roots of her hair, Gene fled through the door by which she had just entered, while the cause of her flight turned

back into the dining-room with a peculiar expression upon his white face.

Dr. Peletier's buggy was just rounding the curve of the drive, and Gene, in order to recover her composure before entering, walked down to meet it.

"Well, my dear, you would walk it, after all, but I must confess you look none the worse for the exertion. Have you ascertained how the young man is?"

"No, I have but just reached here. If it were he whom I encountered in the hall just now, he looks rather ghastly and not very sociable, I should say."

Dr. Peletier laughed. "I shall order him to bed at once, and give you a chance to nurse him into sociability. I know you will enjoy it."

"Hardly. Such work would be more congenial to Lucile than to me. She dotes upon being useful."

Upon examination, the injured arm was found to be in a bad state of inflammation. No bones had been fractured, but the sprain was severe, and the delay in having it attended to was liable to cause no little trouble in the healing process. Dr. Peletier feared that the suffering and fatigue of the patient would develop a fever, and he was ordered to bed without delay.

Madame Teignot had with motherly care provided every comfort within her narrow means for the sick chamber, and when the patient was installed there among the snowy pillows, she and Lucile hovered over him like ministering angels. Gene would as soon have thought of jumping out of the window as of bathing his head in *eau de cologne*, or of assisting the doctor to bandage the injured arm; but to be a helper in sickness and a consoler in affliction was second nature to Lucile.

Contrary to the doctor's fears, no signs of fever developed, but for a week or more the sick man was confined to the pleasant chamber, his every wish anticipated and gratified by his thoughtful nurse. He began to look for her light tap at the door each morning, and her gentle query as to whether he had spent a comfortable night. As Jean Maret watched her moving quietly about the room, arranging the vials here, and some late fall flowers there, he wondered why all women were not like this one. He pictured to himself a home made beautiful by the tender care and efficient guardianship of such an angel, and his eyes would fill with tears at the thought of his own desolation. Lucile de Caulaincourt had done more to touch his heart, and soften his hardened nature to the realization of the good and beautiful in life, than any other human

being. Then the thought of the part he was playing would rush upon his senses with a horrifying chill, and drawing his breath hard he would murmur, "Too late to turn back now."

As he began to show signs of convalescence, Madame Teignot had a couch drawn into the old dining-hall, and there, reclining among the sweet-scented pillows, he would listen to Lucile's expressive voice as she read to him selections from the works that most pleased her. Occasionally, some casual remark upon the subject of which she was reading would provoke a flow of eloquence from the usually reticent lips of her listener. In glowing language he would expatiate upon the beauties of Milton—tell her why he liked Moore's Eastern tales better than Byron's; and Lucile, watching the varying expression of his countenance, unconsciously admiring the while his white teeth and the careless droop of the dark locks, would drink in his words with eager attention, and wonder why she had never looked at it in that light before. The hours by the fireside were so full of happiness for her, that she began to look with dread for the words from his lips that would intimate that he must leave them. Though upon several occasions he had remarked that he must be pressing onward, he still procrastinated, seem-

ing loath to tear himself away from the only true pleasures he had ever experienced. Ever mindful of the rôle he had adopted, the name of his "father" was frequently upon his lips, and he knew that for his own ends, as well as to prevent his hospitable entertainers from regarding him in the light of an imposter, he must be on his way to Pierrepont.

Since the first glimpse he had caught of Gene, parading before the mirror in the twice-borrowed robe, he had seen very little of her. She did not care for sick people, and the weather was far too beautiful to remain indoors. Let Lucile attend to his wants and entertain him; she liked such work.

One afternoon the latter was called away, and Gene, returning after one of her long rambles and hearing no voices in the dining-room, presumed it was vacant, and entered, only to withdraw hastily when she perceived that their guest was the sole occupant.

"Pray do not let my presence interfere with your desires. If you wish to monopolise the occupancy of this room, I shall retire at once; if not, I shall close my eyes in sleep, thus freeing you from the annoyance of conversing with me."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Bourrienne. I am only too pleased to talk with you at any time, but my powers of entertaining are far

inferior to those of my sister, and knowing that she delighted in administering to sick people, and in discussing literature, for which she tells me you have as great a thirst as she, I left you to be entertained in a manner that would be most congenial to you, while I pursued my harum-scarum life out of doors."

"Which harum-scarum proceedings consist, I suppose, in donning gentlemen's driving-coats, and admiring the effect in the mirror; and then, when said gentlemen appear upon the scene, reminding them of their unimportance by taking French leave, as the English say."

They both laughed, and their reserve wore off. Gene seated herself upon a settle, with her feet upon the fender rail and her chin resting upon the palms of her hands.

"No, to-day I found a far more exciting amusement," she said. "There is a young colt on the premises, and with the assistance of Jules Labon, Marianne's husband, I have been trying to break him. He does not belong to us, but a gentleman left him in Jules' care, and that good-natured individual has been kind enough to let me ride him. I would not tell Lucile or Madame Teignot for the world, for they would be forever seeing visions of broken bones and fractured skulls. You appear surprised, Mr. Bourrienne, but

one has to do something to relieve the monotony. Lucile says I am a creature of moods. One moment my spirits are in such a state of exuberance that nothing short of riding wild-horses will satisfy them; the next I am filled with gloom and discontent, and pace the floor bewailing my fate."

"No, I am not surprised by any means—merely amused, that's all. This must indeed be a deuce of a dull place for you girls. So you are breaking a colt? I should like to see you mount him."

"Why can't you? You appear well enough to go out now. The fresh air and sunshine will do you worlds of good. Too much tender care and nursing is bad for folks."

Maret smiled at her frankness, and promised to be on the following day a spectator of her feats in horse-breaking. Accordingly, the next morning Madame Teignot and Lucile were greatly surprised and disturbed by hearing their guest remark that he thought he would take a walk in the grounds. He urged the necessity of his starting out for Pierrepont in a day or two, and said that he thought the fresh air would provide him with the strength necessary for recuperation. Gene, happening to be in the room at the time, glanced up with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, and suggested that Lucile and

she should accompany him. But Lucile, disturbed by the prospect of his departure from among them, begged Gene to appear for both.

Together they wandered down the lane at the back of the house, to the enclosure where Marengo, the colt, was amusing himself by cutting circles at circus-horse pace, and seeing how near he could bring his right side to the ground without touching it. Highly indignant at the interruption of this very interesting performance, the aggravating little creature refused to stand still while Gene mounted him. At last, through the cajolery of a lump of sugar, with which, being aware of Marengo's failings, she had provided herself, she succeeded in getting near enough to grasp his mane, and leading or, rather, dragging him to the fence, she mounted his sleek back. Then with sparkling eyes and merry laugh she exhibited her skill as a horsewoman, and Maret leaning against the pasture rails, watched her graceful figure careering around the field, and thought he had never seen a more charming girl. He wondered how he could have been so blind as to prefer the quiet, gentle sister to this sparkling embodiment of life and wit.

These morning walks and rambles soon became of daily occurrence. Lucile, though not from any intention of slight on either Gene's

or Maret's part, gradually assumed a secondary place. She was no longer essential to the latter's entertainment. Her more vivacious sister, with her inexhaustible fund of amusement, occupied all his time. Sometimes they wandered through the woody lanes on the estate, passing the time in merry repartee or in spirited discussion of some amusing topic. He told her tales of the outside world which she so longed to behold; described the spacious theatres of Paris, with their massive, dome-like roofs; told of the beautiful girls, like herself, who congregated there in elaborate and costly gowns to witness some new opera, or to see some great dramatic tragedy enacted. He described the social side of life, the homes of the wealthy, their carriages, their customs, their occupations.

"And have you a home in Paris, Mr. Bourrienne, as well as in Pierrepont?" Gene asked one day.

The question startled him for a moment, and the blood rushed to his face; but, recovering his self-possession, he replied, "I have chambers there, but my only estate is in these parts."

"It must be fine to be wealthy!" Gene could not help exclaiming.

He looked down into her eyes, and his face became intensely white. For a moment a

sudden impulse, a strange longing, rushed upon him to tell her everything, and beg her to consort with him in his foolish though desperate scheme; but he put it from him—no, he could not ask an innocent girl to join him in his crime and ignominy. Then a tempting voice within him, convincing in its plausible arguments, would endeavor by artful wiles to drown the wavering conscience. "She would never know. Poor old Boury is dead and can never come to life again. I think she cares for you; take her far away to some foreign land, and there among strangers begin life anew, guided by her love and prayers. Worse men than you have married beautiful young girls, and have, by their teachings and example, been saved trom life-long torture and wretchedness. Why should you let all the good things of this life escape you? Why sit by idle, and let other men grapple for the fairest and best?" Maret listened to this voice with eager ears, and for each argument that it whispered he had one of his own to add to it.

Look at Becquet of the Bois—wasn't Mlle. Moulins a thousand times too good for him? And yet had not their marriage turned out to be a happy one? And then that forger—what was his name?—Lafitte—had not he married and kept his deeds a secret from his

wife for years and years? And then, when it did come out, hadn't she taken his part and refused to admit the *commissaires?* Was he any worse than Becquet or Lafitte, that he should fear to risk as much as they?

CHAPTER VIII.

DU MAURIER EXPATIATES.

LUCIEN DU MAURIER sat in his office in the village of Pierrepont, busily engaged in turning over legal documents, perusing old letters and looking up dates, etc. He had been writing for over an hour, and as the result of his labors, a neat little pile of manuscript lay at his elbow, entitled "Statements of Philippe de Bourrienne." This accomplished, he felt more at his ease, and began with studious care to collect important papers and lay them in a valise which he had ready for the occasion. He was preparing for a journey to Paris, in order to use his own sagacious wits in hunting up the son of his deceased friend and principal client. He had lain awake nights of late, trying to arrive at some definite conclusion as to what was to be done in the present not very agreeable state of affairs. He had racked his brain for some answer as to the outcome of it all, but that brain, though overflowing with legal technicalities, could offer neither solution nor suggestion. There was but one thing for him to do

—hunt up young Bourrienne and lay before him the existing circumstances. What could have happened to detain the boy from so sad a duty? He felt more anxiety than he cared to confess.

A tap at the office door, and a shock-headed boy bobbed in with the announcement, "A gentleman to see you, sir!"

"Tell him to send up his card," replied the worried exponent of the law in a not very gentle voice; and turning his back upon the door and boy, he continued his sorting process, soliloquizing the while: "I shall have to discharge that fellow; he doesn't understand his business any more than the dog there. Well, you blockhead," as the door opened, "what does he want?"

"He wishes to see *Monsieur le notaire*," replied a strange voice, and Du Maurier, whirling around, stared at the intruder. The latter was about to present a card, when the old man detained him. "No necessity; I know you—you are Paul de Bourrienne."

"Poor fool," thought the other, "he bites at the bait before it is thrown to him." Then he began his story; he had planned it all out as he lay upon his bed at Le Métairie, gazing up through the open window at the quiet stars.

"Monsieur Du Maurier," he said, "you

see before you an unfortunate victim of most sorrowful circumstances. Receiving your shocking message, and filled with suspense and horror at its dreadful import, I could not hold my excited brain in check until the morning, and so started to drive from Paris to Versailles, in order to take the early train from there the next day. If you know the topography of the country thereabout, you will understand the inconvenience with which I was obliged to contend—a rocky, uncertain, devious route, and a fickle moon whose one instant of clear light rendered the next of more than total darkness. But let me come to the point. Near Dantzic we were upset, the result proving fatal to a friend who accompanied me, and leaving me in a far from enviable condition. With a sprained arm and bruised body I sat waiting in the chill of the early morning for the light of day to guide me to some place where assistance could be obtained.

"Securing the aid of an old farmer who happened to be passing, I managed to get poor Maret's body as far as the village, where it was taken in charge by the good people; and then, fearing the result of procrastination, I hastened onward, hoping to reach Pierrepont by noon; but weak from pain and fatigue, I was obliged to solicit the hospitality

of a good woman and her nieces, not far from here, and under the shelter of their roof I lay at death's door for almost three weeks. At the end of that time, having regained sufficient strength to bear me onward, I made my way to Versailles, and taking a through express, arrived here half an hour ago. Imagine my feelings, when in the village the sad and horrifying news greeted my ears that all that remained of my beloved relative had been consigned to the dust of the tomb. Almost heart-broken, I made my way to the old home, and there, surrounded by familiar objects, my mind overflowing with incidents of my childhood which came flocking before my eyes, called forth by the well known scenes, I bowed my head and wept for him whom I should never more behold."

Du Maurier, with his head resting upon his hand, watched the supposed son of his friend with half-closed but attentive eyes. The acting was of far too clever a nature for even the shadow of a suspicion to enter the old man's mind; still he felt strangely puzzled and dissatisfied. He disliked Paul de Bourrienne. No tears filled his eyes at the affecting tale; no words of pity or consolation came to his lips. He felt sorry for Philippe de Bourrienne's son, yet he could find no sincere or comforting expressions. A feeling of relief

had entered his heart. Heretofore he had looked forward with dread to the moment when he should stand face to face with young Bourrienne. He dreaded the lad's sorrow at the sad news he should have to impart; but now that he had come and ascertained the truth himself, that difficult duty was disposed of; he had dreaded the fearful effect of the disclosure he would have to make, and now, strange to say, he was fully prepared for it.

"Bourrienne," he said, "I should offer you condolence, but when the heart is grieved by so deep a loss as yours, the superficial expressions of strangers but serve to aggravate the wound. May God give you strength to bear up under the combination of sorrows with which He has seen fit to surround you."

Maret bowed his head in token of appreciation, but seeing that the lawyer had something to say, continued silent.

"When did you last see your father, Bourrienne?"

"I have not seen him for several years. It must be eight, at least, if not more."

"Where did the meeting take place?"

"It was in Paris, at the Stanislas College. My father had come from Pierrepont to look up my collegiate record, and while in town he was my guest."

"Did he appear in good health and spirits

at that time? You will pardon my catechising you in this manner, but upon your replies depends the unravelling of a rather perplexing state of affairs."

"Any information regarding my father that I possess I shall be pleased to give," replied the other suavely, but an inward nervousness had begun to assail him, and he wondered what was coming next.

"Will you do your best," continued the lawyer, "to recall any instance in which Philippe de Bourrienne, your father, referred to his early life as a student at Paris?"

After a pause of a few moments, Maret replied in the negative. "I can recall no such incident," he said.

"Very well, can you tell me anything about your father's marriage to your mother?"

"I cannot, sir; now that I think of it, I cannot recall a single instance when either he or my mother referred to that subject."

"What was your mother's maiden name?"

"She was the daughter of an Englishman named Howard."

"What was her Christian name?"

"Strange to say, M. Du Maurier, I do not know. Should anyone tell me of a man who did not know his mother's maiden name in full, I should scoff at the idea; nevertheless, such is my own case."

"Can you tell me where your mother's home was before her marriage?"

"No, I cannot."

"*Trés bien! Trés bien!*" and in his abrupt way Du Maurier swung around on his office chair, and began to look over the papers on his desk. Having found what he sought, he laid it on one side and began to arrange the remaining documents with deliberate precision in their respective archives. Maret noticed that upon the outside of the chosen paper there were certain brownish spots which resembled blood. He shuddered involuntarily, and for the time being wished himself a thousand miles away from the staid presence of Monsieur Du Maurier and his poignant interrogations.

"Now, if I may claim your attention for a few moments," began the lawyer, "I will relate as well as I know how certain incidents in your father's life which have but recently come to light. I should advise you to brace your nerves for a rather trying ordeal; we are but victims of circumstances, and it is generally the strange and unexpected that happens. As I wrote you, your father had been in failing strength for some time past, and although he was not an old man, I greatly feared and anticipated his death. He also seemed aware of his condition, and although he said nothing upon the subject of death, I perceived by his

actions that his mind was ill at ease. Upon several occasions he evinced a desire to have you near him, and I, knowing that your business in Paris was of no very urgent nature, wrote you as you are aware, touching lightly upon the subject of your father's health, thinking that it would be a sufficient incentive for you to come to Pierrepont. You did not heed the letter, however, and in the course of a few weeks I wrote another, which I intended should be rather brusque in character. Still this failed to evoke a satisfactory result; and finally, at our wits' ends, Philippe and I put our heads together and concocted a scheme, whereby you were to be made to believe that your presence at Pierrepont was no less than a necessity. Hence the telegram you received. It was carrying matters to an extreme, sir, but you will admit that your negligence justified the move on our part.

"Now I shall condense a little. You have heard in the village of your father's violent death, the subsequent unsettled state of affairs, and the various speculations as to the cause of the deed, the most popular theory being temporary insanity. What you have not heard is this—that he left behind him a decided proof that his death was not the result of a moment of insanity, as the villagers suppose, but a premeditated action. Upon his corpse

I found this document, addressed to me by his hand, perhaps years and years ago; for the tale that it discloses had been locked within the recesses of Philippe de Bourrienne's brain for over a quarter of a century, causing that organ to throb and ache in its endeavors to hold the vile thing there away from the eyes of the world. Only you and I can know the sensations of the man as he nursed his bitter secret, fearing lest it should break away from his grasp, or by its relentless torments drive him to a fate worse than death—insanity. Pardon me, Bourrienne, if I make this disclosure harder for you than seems necessary. I should confine myself to facts alone, but your father honored me with his regard, and for years I have held the place of counsellor and friend to him; thus the shock I received made a lasting impression upon me, and I cannot forbear to expatiate upon a life which could have been but little better than a hell upon earth."

Maret remained silent. Here was something he had not anticipated. Did the disclosure this man was about to make relate in any way to himself? He sincerely hoped not; now that he had risked so much, a sudden blow to his aspirations would be scarcely welcome.

The lawyer continued in a more quiet tone: "I was your father's friend, Bourrienne; I am

therefore yours, if you will have it so. The story I am about to relate shall remain a secret between you and me, if, without violating the law, we may maintain silence. That remains to be seen. This is a condensed account of what this paper contains:

"In the early part of the year 18—, Philippe de Bourrienne, then a lad of about twenty, was placed by his father at a school in Paris to undergo a practical training in commercial affairs. During his residence in the city, he became acquainted with a young girl from the Province of Touraine, a girl of questionable character but of remarkably fine looks, one Pauline Lassard. So infatuated did he become with her, and so frequently was he seen in her society, that his fellow students began to rally him about the woman. At first he took these well meant sallies good-naturedly, but as his infatuation increased, they annoyed and jarred upon him to such an extent, that he resolved to settle the question by marrying her. Accordingly, upon the morning of June twenty-ninth, at the church of St. Germain-de-Prés, he made Pauline Lassard his wife. When the fact became known to his fellow-students, they were dumbfounded. Had Bourrienne lost his mind? Mademoiselle might be a nice enough girl, but Bourrienne belonged to the aristocracy of France, and should look in that quar-

ter for a wife, not in the slums of Paris. They ceased to rally him, but one or two could not forbear from expressing their sentiments. At these he became indignant, and quitting college and his former friends altogether, he took his wife to England, where, after several months' struggling, he became established in the business from which he afterwards derived his fortune. Meanwhile his father had died, bequeathing to him the estate in the village of Pierrepont and the revenue thereto attached. Owing to mercantile affairs, however, he still remained in London, intending, when he had by his own efforts amassed an independent fortune, to return to his patrimonial estate.

"During the first few months of their married life, Monsieur and Madame de Bourrienne lived in blissful harmony, but as time went on Madame's true characteristics began to crop out. In her real personality she was anything but the loving, docile creature her husband had supposed her to be. Petty quarrels at length grew into serious disputes, and Philippe de Bourrienne and his wife led a life of such antagonism that it became almost impossible for them to reside beneath the same roof. He found that instead of the gentle creature he had believed her to be, his wife was no less than a shrew. Matters remained in this state for over a year, at the expiration of which

time, Bourrienne was beginning to meditate upon the question of life and death, which question his wife settled for him by disappearing one night and never returning. He learned afterwards that she had consorted with a young Englishman who lived in the vicinity of their hotel.

"Filled with disgust and regret, and regarding life as a burden, he returned to France, and for several months shut himself up at his place here. Later he returned to London and resumed his former mercantile life. A certain attractive personality, a ready wit, plenty of money, and an old and honored name in France, gained him access to a select circle in London, and in the whirl and excitement of social life, he endeavored to forget his past folly and the millstone it had forged about his neck. Then he met your mother, and for the first time he knew what love meant, but, alas! too late. What made his position still more bitter was the fact that his love was reciprocated. He tried to make himself believe that Madame de Bourrienne was dead, but all to no avail; then he thought of divorce, but there again hope failed him, for he dreaded publicity.

"After fighting manfully against temptation, and endeavoring by every art in his power to to his work.

forget the English girl, he at last sold himself to the devil by marrying her, and quieting his conscience by the thought that she need never know, and that her happiness depended upon it. And she never did know. Your mother, considering herself the most blessed and fortunate of wives and mothers, died leaving to Bourrienne's care a young son, yourself. It is needless to say that as you grew into manhood your father's conscience began to suffer bitter, heart-rending pangs; 'tis needless to say that with days of torture and nights of sleeplessness and regret, he worked himself into a condition of mind bordering upon insanity. But enough of this; you understand the import. Young man, you are illegitimate."

Du Maurier waited in uneasy silence for his listener to speak. Maret sat in silence; he was thinking. For a moment he forgot his acting; the revelation of facts which had just been poured into his ears had stunned him. He was thinking of his own stand in the matter. It made but little difference, now that poor old Boury was dead, whether his father had been married or not, so long as he, Jean Maret, came into possession of the estate. At length, raising his eyes to the lawyer's face, he astounded that individual by quietly asking, "In default of another heir, I of course inherit the property?"

Du Maurier had expected to hear a stormy outburst of grief, of horror and of condemnation. Indeed, he feared that curses would fall from the lips of the man before him upon the head of the dead man. He was amazed at the coolness of young Bourrienne. Recovering from his surprise, he said in a voice in which he could ill conceal his disgust: "You are, of course, the son of Philippe de Bourrienne, and for want of another heir you succeed to your father's property; but wait, I have a further disclosure to make. Your father had been married about eight years, and you were six years old, when he received an anonymous letter dated from some obscure town in England, telling him that he was the father of a nine year old son. Knowing that his first wife had been in a delicate condition when she fled from him, he regarded the statement as authentic, and thus added to his own misery.

"I have but one more thing to say. As your father's friend I would do much for his son, but in doing it I will not overstep the bounds of the law. It is my duty, therefore, to make investigations in England and elsewhere as to the whereabouts of this woman. If she has a son, he is heir to your father's property; if not, you are the next and indisputable claimant, and you may rest assured that no words from my lips will cause the

world to look upon you as other than the rightful son of Monsieur and Madame de Bourrienne. Doubtless my search will be a fruitless one, but it is a duty that must not stand neglected. Meanwhile you shall occupy in reality the position you now hold in the eyes of the people, that of owner of all Philippe de Bourrienne's worldly goods."

Stretching out his hand, he shook that of Maret, and bade him good-day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLIGHT OF GENE DE CAULAINCOURT.

"I WONDER what has come over Gene, aunt. She seems unlike herself of late; strangely quiet and reserved. Have you noticed it?"

"Dear me, you girls amuse me; only yesterday Gene came to me with a most serious countenance, and observed that something unusual was the matter with Lucile. She said that you had a far-away look in your eyes and seemed unusually absent-minded for you. At breakfast yesterday, she said that you started to pour the coffee into the sugar-bowl, and when she called your attention to the fact you started and colored noticeably."

Lucile laughed. "I am afraid we both are developing signs of insanity, or else our eyes are at fault. I was afraid she was not well, but now I know my fears were groundless, since she has been seeing the same signs in myself; for I never felt better in my life."

Madame Teignot smiled good-naturedly over her work. She liked to talk to Lucile; she was such a nice, lady-like girl. Gene was

far too wild to suit her quiet tastes, although she loved the girl and had acted the part of counsellor and guide to them both for the last eight years.

They were sitting in the cosy old kitchen, a favorite resort of Madame's when the day's work was over, and their surroundings were as clean and neat as wax.

"Aunt," said Lucile, after a protracted pause, "do you think Monsieur de Bourrienne will come back?"

"I do not know, my dear. I extracted a promise from him to that effect, but now that he has quite recovered from his illness, he will, no doubt, find plenty to occupy him at his own home. I hope that the lad's father has survived his sickness; it would be a sad shock to him to meet with death just now."

The next question caused the good lady to glance up from her knitting and stare at Lucile over her spectacles.

"Did you not consider him handsome, aunt? Such teeth, and such eyes! and then he is such a brilliant young man. I think it is his intelligence that attracts one most, don't you?"

"I am sure I don't know, my dear. Yes, I should call him rather handsome, though I am not much of a judge."

"He was with us two weeks, wasn't he?

Let me see, the accident occurred on the fifth and this is the fourteenth; not quite ten days. I wonder where Gene is to-night."

"Wandering through the woods as usual, I suppose. That girl will meet with a mishap one of these days, mark my words. What do you suppose Marianne told me? She said that Jules came in the other day, chuckling away to himself, and being asked what amused him so, refused to tell until she threatened him with plain bread and tea for supper. Then he gave in and told her that Gene had broken the colt."

"Broken the colt, aunt!"

"Yes, I learned from Marianne that Jules had given her permission to try her hand at that very ladylike proceeding, and that she had far surpassed him in the business."

"Well, well, and do you suppose that was where she and Monsieur de Bourrienne spent their mornings this last week?"

"O dear, I hope not. She would not be so rude as to let him see her in such an unwomanly position. What would a gentleman of refinement like M. de Bourrienne, think of such a girl?"

"I think he rather liked Gene, don't you aunt?"

Again Madame Teignot glanced over her spectacles, but meeting a calm, straightfor-

ward gaze from Lucile, went on with her work hurriedly. "Yes, she seemed to amuse him."

A long silence followed this reply. Then Madame Teignot, with a rather vague idea of communicating her own sentiments upon a certain subject, and in a direction in which she meant they should take effect, began: "I suppose he will marry wealth one of these days. These young aristocrats always do. Rank marries rank, and money marries money, these times. They consider it a sort of duty among the upper classes to unite large fortunes and ancient names. For my part I think it is just as well. When a man, or a woman either for that matter, marries below his or her station, there is sure to be discontent on one or both sides, and where discontent dwells happiness can never be."

Lucile ventured no reply, and Madame went on in her quiet way. "When I was a young girl, that was many years ago, my dear, if a young woman of good blood chose a husband from the commoners, she was considered disgraced for life; or vice versa, if a rich man's son married a poor girl, he was cut off without a sou. These strict customs have been modified somewhat, but they are still in vogue to a certain extent."

Lucile listened to this discourse for a while longer, and then saying that she intended

to retire early because of a slight headache, kissed the old lady good-night and left her nodding over her knitting.

Lighting one of the lamps upon the hall table, Lucile carried it up the old winding staircase to her room, and setting it upon the dresser, sat down upon the bed to think. She clasped her hands about her knees, a habitual attitude of hers, and gazed steadily at vacancy, as one is apt to do when the mind is deeply engrossed. At last she aroused from her revery and drawing a chair near the dresser, sat down to read; but her attention wandered and after turning a few pages half mechanically, she shut the book and leaning her head against the chair-back, surveyed the objects in the room. It was a large chamber, hung with heavy, moth-eaten draperies and furnished with quaint, solid-looking furniture of some dark, polished wood. The small lamp with its flickering flame served but poorly to illuminate its depths, and Lucile, thinking it looked shadowy and gloomy, arose, and going to the window, pulled back the curtain and looked out upon the moonlit grounds. She felt nervous and wished Gene would come in and talk or read to her. What could keep her out so late?

At that moment a figure emerged from the shrubbery and crossed the lawn. The front

door closed, and the next moment she heard Gene's voice bidding good-night to Madame Teignot. Lucile left the window hurriedly, though she could not have told just why she did so; and when Gene entered she was apparently deeply absorbed in her book.

"Well, Lucile, how has it turned out; did Naomi marry the count?"

"I haven't reached that part yet, I think it's in the next chapter. You stayed out late, Gene; aren't you afraid of taking cold with that thin thing on? There was a heavy dew to-night."

"It's not at all damp now, and the moon is lovely. I walked as far as Dantzic and back."

"What, to-night?"

"Yes, and enjoyed it too," replied Gene, who seemed to be in excellent spirits. "Coming home through the woods, old Jerome Giac's dog joined me, and we had a race across the park. I thought at first that he was a man, and kept as still as a mouse for a moment, and listened; then I heard old Azor sniffing around in search of stray cats, and I whistled to him."

"How can you be so careless, Gene? I would no more dare to go over that road alone after dark, than I would to spend a night in old Mam'selle Saxe's cottage, which Marianne swears is haunted."

Gene laughed, and, throwing off her hat, began to prepare for bed. She talked brightly all the while, and joked with Lucile about her timidity. "I believe you have never recovered from your childish fears of ghosts and goblins. Do you remember how Madame Tallien used to lock us in the big garret under the eaves, when we didn't know our lessons, and tell us that there were hobgoblins there ready to devour us? If there isn't a just retribution in store for that woman, I am greatly mistaken."

Before extinguishing the light, she put her arms around Lucile and kissed her affectionately. "What makes you look so gloomy tonight, dear? Has aunt been wearying you with her long stories, or does your head ache, or what?"

"Do I look as mournful as all that? It must be imagination on your part, for I haven't felt so well for a long time. Come, I'm sleepy; put out the light, and let's go to bed."

Gene turned down the wick of the lamp and watched it until the light flickered out; then drawing back the window curtains, she allowed the moonlight to fall in a silvery flood upon the floor. As she looked toward the bed she saw that Lucile was praying. She waited until her devotions were ended, meanwhile

looking out upon the still, beautiful night. Then creeping into the bed beside her sister, she lay with wide-open eyes waiting for the latter to fall asleep. At last the healthy drowsiness of youth stole over her own senses, and Gene slept.

Awaking with a start from a frightful dream, she sat up in bed. A clock in the village was striking twelve. Glancing at Lucile, she saw that she was sleeping soundly and in no danger of waking. With stealthy movements, Gene arose and donned her clothes. Then going to the window, she looked out upon the lawn, as if waiting for some sign from without. It came a few moments after midnight,and turning from the window she stole lightly to the bed and looked down upon the sleeping form. She stooped and kissed the pillow over which the brown hair lay in pretty confusion, and then turning, laid a folded letter upon the table, and stole quietly from the room and down the stairs to the hall. The bolts of the front door, which had been previously oiled, slid noiselessly back, and Gene emerged upon the lawn to join a figure waiting beneath the trees.

The sun stealing in through the unshielded casement awoke Lucile bright and early. Rubbing her sleepy eyes, she murmured, "What time is it, Gene?"

There was no answer, and Lucile, turning, found that she was the sole occupant of the bed. "Dear, dear, I've over-slept again; no wonder Gene says I lack vitality." Glancing toward the clock upon the dresser, she saw to her surprise that it lacked several minutes of seven. "Gone on another early-morning stroll, I suppose. It's too early for me to dress yet, but I'm not sleepy, so I may as well finish that chapter I began last night. There will be just about time to do that and dress before breakfast."

Slipping out of bed, Lucile went to the table, and, having gotten the book, was about to return to the bed, when her name upon a slip of folded paper caught her eye. She stared at it in surprise for a few moments, and then, fearing she knew not what, opened it and read the first few words. With a cry of agony Lucile threw herself down by the bed, and burying her face in the pillows moaned—"Gone! and with him. God give me strength to bear it!"

Two hours later, when Madame Teignot, wondering what detained the girls so long from breakfast, went to their room, she found Lucile lying upon the bed, with white, set features, and dry, feverish-looking eyes. There was no need for her to explain. The little note so hastily scrawled and so strangely

unlike the girl who was gone, told everything, and there was a peculiar look upon Madame's aged face as she read the, to her, heartless lines.

"Dear little sister :—

"Do not think too hardly of your poor Gene. Paul and I were married to-night at the rector's house in Dantzic. You wondered what had kept me out so late ; that was it. I know you will consider me ungrateful and unkind, but really, Lucile, I could not do otherwise. Paul loves me so dearly and feared aunt's opposition so much, that he made me swear to secrecy until it was all over, and we were on our way to the land of my dreams. Just think, Lucile, I shall see the world at last. Dear old Madame Teignot, she has been such a good mother to us both. Kiss her for me, and beg her to forgive my seeming ingratitude. I never thought, dear, I could have the heart to leave you so, but love makes selfish creatures of us all, and I love Paul better than life.

"With love and kisses until we meet again,

"Gene (Madame de Bourrienne).

"Does not that look grand?"

And so the world has gone on for twenty centuries, and so it will go on for twenty more ; and ye who are among the slighted ones of fortune's creatures, must bow your heads before your unavoidable destinies and murmur with Lucile de Caulaincourt, "Never morning passed to evening but some heart did break."

CHAPTER X.

AT THE COTTAGE OF DAVID.

"AY, thou art right, my good Janet; it is not the poor alone who suffer misfortune and misery. God, in his infinite mercy, distributes his trials and blessings equally amongst us, though at times, when sorely burdened, we may doubt his protection and love."

"Ay, my good man, he knoweth best, yet my heart bleeds for the poor young gentleman hasting on to a father's deathbed, and for this poor lad here cut off in the beauty of youth. Doth not his face remind thee, David, of our poor Jacques? Would that I could aid him for our dead lad's sake, God rest his soul; but he is beyond all earthly help now, and it but remains for us to see that he receives a Christian burial. Go thou out, David, and bring the good man. He will know what is to be done, and see to it, man, the idle gossipers do not get the tale. We want not noise and rabble, and the face of the dead should e'er be sacred from the eyes of the curious. But first, David, do thou raise his head while I spread this robe over and around him. Poor

boy, I wonder if he has a mother—hist! man, the lad moved!"

"Art thou mad, Janet?"

"Nay, but if these eyes have not played me false in my old age, I could swear, David, that I did see his breast heave."

"This shock hath unnerved thee, woman; thou needest rest and quiet. Misfortune and sorrow ne'er knocked at thy door but what thou didst forget thine own welfare to minister unto others. Go thou out, and let the good father and myself prepare the corpse."

"Nay, but it is no corpse!"

"Out, woman! he hath lain since early morning without stir or sound. Dost thou believe in the uncanny?"

"Nay, but ere this, David, man has been known to lie for hours in swoons resembling death. The lad is not dead, man; canst thou not see a slight movement of the breast? And feel, this flesh is not dead flesh. Haste thee for a doctor, David, for should we neglect or delay, there would be naught less than murder upon our souls."

With a startled, colorless countenance, the old man hastened from the cottage, and Janet, with skillful hands and steady nerves, began her work of resuscitation. Through the aid of her old-fashioned ministrations, the man, though still unconscious, was breathing

heavily when David returned with a doctor. The latter found, upon examination, that the brain was suffering a severe pressure of some kind, which if not removed within a short time, would result in death eventually. In response to the eager inquiries of Janet, he assured her that there was no danger as yet.

"The breath comes quite regularly now, you see. He will probably become delirious in a short time, but do not be afraid, my good woman. Though a serious case, there is yet hope if the proper assistance can be procured in time. He must be removed from this couch to a bed immediately—I suppose you have one which you can spare; and then I shall send for a surgeon to perform the necessary operation."

Accordingly, David was despatched to the next town in all haste, and Janet with untiring energy hovered over the sick man, hoping by her gentle ministrations to provoke some sign of returning conciousness. When the surgeon arrived, a slight operation was performed upon the brain, and then the patient was consigned to the reliable care of his mother Nature.

"He is young, I should say not more than twenty-three or four, and youth and strength are valuable aids in a case of this kind," observed the surgeon. "I shall leave him in your care, doctor, and hope by to-morrow to hear good reports of him."

Janet sat down beside the bed to watch and wait for any favorable signs. Her Jacques had lain upon that very bed one long year ago, tossing and turning in endless pain, and at last was laid to rest in the churchyard in the village. She looked upon the handsome face and form before her, and her motherly heart was filled with sorrow and pity. Her own boy had been at home under a mother's loving care, but this lad was away from home and kindred; and if he died, how wild and deep would be the grief of those who awaited his return.

"Dost thou not think, doctor, that the lad's companion should be told of his error? He left here believing that his friend was dead, and did place in my man's hands money for the burial. Poor fellow, he was deeply grieved to leave the boy, for they had been friends for years."

"Where is the young man's companion? I shall see that he receives word of his friend's state the first thing in the morning."

"That I cannot tell thee, doctor. That he is a youth of some high standing, I know, but in the hurry and confusion of the moment I did forget to inquire his name. I cannot even tell thee his destination."

"That is unfortunate, indeed. You say he was hurrying to his father's deathbed? I have heard of no serious illness in this vicinity

of late. Perhaps it is farther on in Versailles. However, we will wait and see how matters shape themselves. If everything turns out for the best, the young man himself may be able to give us the desired information."

For weeks young Bourrienne lay in a critical condition, but his constitution was strong and vigorous, and fought hard for mastery in the struggle between life and death. The first days were those of unbroken suffering and delirium. His wild and incoherent ravings would strike terror to the heart of the good Janet, but true to her resolve to act the part of a mother to the unfortunate youth, she never deserted her post, but with untiring patience and cheerfulness, hurried to and fro, bathing his burning temples, preparing the draughts that the doctor ordered, and never once complaining of weariness.

As the delirium gradually subsided, Bourrienne would have fleeting spells of consciousness, during which he would ask for Jean Maret, and beg for news of his father's condition, which utterances Janet, true to the old custom of humoring the sick or feeble-minded, would either answer favorably or evade, and would murmur as she turned away, "Poor boy, how he wanders! He doth believe himself to be in his friend's place."

In his weakened state they dared not

question him, lest the endeavor to collect his scattered thoughts should shatter the already feeble reasoning power, and undo the work that tender care and careful nursing had accomplished. And so he lay amidst his humble surroundings, oblivious to the affairs of the outer world, and little dreaming that the father whom he loved and respected despite the heartless, neglectful course into which the follies of youth had led him, had for weeks been lying beside his mother in a newly sodded grave within the peaceful country graveyard of Pierrepont. He had called upon him in his delirium, had whispered his mother's name, and at times imagined himself back at the old home, a child once more, with a child's happy dreams and pleasures.

Another name was often upon his lips, that of Julie; and Janet as she heard it would smile and murmur, "The poor lad has a sweetheart waiting for him at home. Thank God, the poor child was spared the sorrow of his loss. I remember well how I felt when my David fell from the hay-loft and lay betwixt life and death. It is sad indeed to lose one's sweetheart."

CHAPTER XI.

ACCORDING TO MADAME'S CREED.

It has been said that there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. So also, according to worldly doctrine, there is during the existence of the weaker sex an age when they should launch their frail crafts upon a lottery of matrimonial affluence, and spreading out their grasping tentacles, gather in its floating spoils. Such at least was a part of Madame Carbonnet's creed.

Julie was coming of age, and in anticipation of the event, great preparations had been going on in la Rue St. Denis; which preparations, by the way, although planned, suggested and carried out under Madame's supervision, were to be settled for financially out of Julie's own income, once she gained its control. For the last six weeks the house had presented a scene of disquiet and confusion. Upholsterers had been at work in the halls and salons; hardwood floors had been introduced into various apartments; the walls had been subjected to a scouring, painting and papering

process; stairways had been widened and polished; carpets beaten and renovated; while the outside of the wooden mansion had been treated to a coat of greenish paint, and an L containing a new suite of rooms for Madame's especial use, had been added by that lady's express orders to the original structure.

Then when the mechanical improvements had been completed, Madame had set to work to make the interior conform with her ideas of the beautiful. A shrewd eye, alert to all the modes and customs of the fashionable set, and an income of inexhaustible resource, considering the fact that it was to be paid back sou for sou, had enabled her to unite fad with luxury and grandeur with fashion, until the home of the Carbonnets had begun to be regarded by their friends and acquaintances as the exemplification of elegance.

The Japanese room, a pretty little bower suggested by Julie, was considered a gem of Oriental art. Madame knew where to look upon le Boulevard des Capucines for the most beautiful art fabrics of the East, where to procure the most unique bric-a-brac and bronzes, the most valuable curios, the latest fads in Benares brass-work, the most costly rugs and draperies; and moreover, despite her recent advent into socialdom, she did not possess, like many of her associates, that lamentable

faculty of confounding the foreign with the native, the antique with the modern.

A characteristic sharpness of perception enabled her to detect the slightest defect in the blending of colors, or any incongruity in arrangement or taste, and she used this gift, together with the efficient aid that Julie's suggestions afforded, to such advantage that the most discriminating connoisseur could utter no complaint against Madame Carbonnet's mode of preparing a home.

Upon entering the Turkish salon at the rear of the entrance hall, one glanced around involuntarily, half expecting to see some dusky beauty of the East reclining amidst the gorgeous cushions, or a pompous member of the Yildiz Kiosk, upon whom Kuvera had seen fit to smile, brilliant in the regalia of his office, and surrounded by his native seraglio—so perfect, so complete was the effect in every detail of appointment.

Madame's rooms were fitted up, regardless of cost, with all new furnishings, among which very light and youthful shades predominated; for notwithstanding the fact that Madame's youthful charms had long ago passed into history, and that other and less potent charms, hovering upon the wings of obesity, had usurped their places, she still clung to the feminine propensity of reckoning time by her

own manufactured schedule, and age by the imprint it had left upon her stout form and flabby countenance, after certain artificial manœuvres, best known to Madame herself, had been accomplished.

And then, when the changes had all been completed, when the drapers and the upholsterers, the hangers and the decorators, had gone on their way, what a bustling, gossiping, restless state of affairs existed at the house of the Carbonnets. Friends and acquaintances who had been too busy to call during the last year, "dropped in" by the score; and all, as a matter of course, must be shown the house from garret to cellar, ere they could quite make up their minds to drop out again. Madame received each day in a flowing black satin, which, although it had not come from Paquin's (that gentleman having flatly refused, for fear of jeopardizing future patronage, to drape a figure so lamentably beyond control as Madame's) gave evidence of a lavish expenditure of *louis d'or*, and what more could Madame ask for?

It is generally cited that congenial surroundings give birth to congenial temperaments and conditions; but such, it would seem, was not the case in the present instance, for barely a fortnight had gone on its way since the striking metamorphosis in the house of Carbonnet

had taken place, when the three members of that quiet household were plunged into an angry sea of opposition, particularly the female representatives—for Monsieur remained ostensibly neutral—who stood at swords' points with each other, each solemnly vowing within her indignant breast that her particular cause would win the day.

It had all come about in this way: A young student of excellent family and splendid income, one Alexandre Paget, had become greatly enamored of Julie's charms and, by cajolery and fulsome flattery, had so far won Madame Carbonnet to his cause, that she had promised that through her intercession Julie's hand should be his. The offer seemed a flattering one to Madame's secular comprehension, and she fondly believed that under her wise supervision Julie's station in life would be secured. Since, as she reasoned to herself, young Bourrienne had been so blind to his own interests as to fly away to parts unknown upon coming into possession of his father's estate, she must look in other directions for a suitable *parti*, and as no more eligible suitor than Alexandre Paget had presented himself, she resolved that Paget it should be at all hazards. She did not dream of consulting Julie's wishes upon the matter—what more could a girl want than a house on

the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse and an income of splendid proportions? And so they had planned it all, Madame and Alexandre, who was not a bad young fellow, although somewhat spoiled by an over-indulgent home training, and a great deal of petting on the part of the feminine sex because of his blue eyes and curly hair.

On the night of Julie's birthday, Madame had held a soirée in her honor, and it was decided between herself and the youthful aspirant that during the evening he should seek Julie out and propose the question to her. Paget, who was bashful, had looked forward to the moment when he should declare his love, with stringent pangs of apprehension, and had begged Madame to give him the benefit of her motherly counsel as to how he should begin his suit. Madame, accordingly, had thought it over in order to determine how she herself would prefer to be approached in such an event, and had then advised Alexandre to steal upon Julie while she sat alone in some dimly lighted corner, and kiss her before she was aware of his presence. This, after a great preliminary mustering of courage, young Paget had done, and had been rewarded for his trouble, not only by a flat refusal of his offer, but a smart slap in the face for his unexampled impudence. Then, the picture of wounded

manhood and "despised love," he had fled from the house, tearing his hair, and cursing Madame in his heart for the indignities he had been led into through her false counseling.

And then upon the morrow had come the *coup de vent*, in which Madame's imperative commands that Julie should send for young Paget, apologize, and accept him, had been held in haughty defiance by that young lady, who manifested, to Monsieur Carbonnet's private satisfaction—for he had been a silent witness of the violent irruption—that she had a decidedly determined will of her own. Truly is it said that cowardice best betrays itself by its idolatrous worship of courage.

And now there was a cessation of hostilities, and Julie, with heavy eyes and face discolored by weeping, was amusing herself by throwing pillows and foot-rests about the Japanese room, and by uttering spiteful little nothings against the world in general, and Madame Carbonnet in particular. Was she not engaged to Paul de Bourrienne? and just because he happened to have gone away somewhere for a little while, was she to prove so fickle as to become engaged to another? How dared Madame propose such a thing!

Monsieur, meek and unruffled as usual, paced the hall with even, mincing steps, pa-

tiently waiting for Madame to close the door of her apartments, in order that he might safely offer Julie his congratulations and commend her manner of defending "Mon petit Paul."

Madame reclined in her airy apartments, fanning herself violently in her vain endeavors to cool the rising anger in her breast at the whole ungovernable race of Carbonnets. Bah! they were all a set of fools. To be sure, if the girl's brains and Carbonnet's together were put into a dice-box, one would need an ear-trumpet to hear them rattle. What a simpleton the girl was to be so blind to her future interests. Why, her fortune and Paget's combined would swell their income to almost princely proportions. And at the very thought of such insane disregard for opulence, Madame's heavy foot tapped the floor in angry impatience. Pshaw! let the little fool shift for herself now. She had done her part and would wash her hands of the whole matter. But despite this inward decision, Madame's angry countenance relaxed no whit. Carbonnet would secretly crow over her failure, no doubt, for he favored that fool Bourrienne—a plague upon the girl!

Suddenly the restless fan began to move less hurriedly, the foot ceased its angry tapping, and the big chair, which had been rock-

ing violently, came to a standstill. Madame had an idea!

Moving quickly across the room, she sat down at a dainty desk—a desk that would have formed a fitting ornament for a child's apartment, and wrote rapidly for several moments; and as she directed a scented note to the *Journal*, she smiled maliciously and murmured, "The little vixen is as proud as Lucifer. If her name once comes before the public coupled with that of young Paget, she will marry him rather than allow the gossips to think she was jilted." So reasoned Madame.

The note to the *Journal* ran thus: "M. and Mme. Carbonnet announce the engagement of their niece, Mlle. Julie Carbonnet, to M. Alexandre Paget of this city."

CHAPTER XII.

STAR-CROSSED.

BOURRIENNE had survived the critical stage of his illness and, though still weak and incapacitated for exertion of any kind, was gradually moving on toward convalescence. Though he begged to be allowed to leave his bed and continue his journey, Janet met all his pleadings with firm though gentle resistance. She still believed that his mind was deranged, and that by some strange delusion of the brain he believed himself to be the man who had been his companion upon that ill-fated drive. In this way she accounted for the, to her, strange utterances that fell from his lips, and the good woman often asked herself the question, would he ever recover his faculties? For now that his physical strength was returning, she could not imagine why the mental organs should remain in the state of confusion that his every utterance indicated.

The country doctor, a man of excellent temperament, exemplary character, and all the other attributes that go to make up a successful physician, excepting the all-important ones

of thorough medical knowledge and practical ability (the villagers about the vicinity of Dantzic were seldom sick, and in consequence, *M. le docteur's* profession was about as flourishing as that of the apothecary in the lover's play) had made inquiries regarding the death or serious illness of any gentleman in the vicinity; and from the information thus elicited, and from the reports of Janet regarding the patient's ravings (for as such she considered Bourrienne's anxious queries for his father) he derived the conclusion that the young man's friend was none other than the son of the suicide Bourrienne, whose tragic end had been the talk of the country for twenty miles around. Accordingly the good man made a journey to Pierrepont, only to meet with disappointment, in view of the fact that young Monsieur de Bourrienne had left there a few days previously, and nobody seemed to be cognizant of his whereabouts.

Knowledge of this journey and its unsatisfactory result, was of course kept from young Bourrienne, and he, having fully recovered from his delirium, and inwardly burning for information as to affairs at Pierrepont, could find no satisfactory explanation for the strange way in which his queries were met and disposed of, and began to resent what seemed to him uncalled-for treatment. He could offer

no solution of the mystery whatever. The evasive replies of Janet when he asked for news of his father or Jean Maret, annoyed him to such an extent that he could scarcely retain his patience.

After several days passed in this manner, each playing at cross purposes, Bourrienne awoke one morning, fully determined that ere the day closed he should receive some news from his home, either by despatching a messenger or, in the event of a failure to obtain one, by going himself. He was very weak, it was true, and unfit for such an undertaking, but what would he not risk for the information he craved. Anything was preferable to suspense. Janet, thinking he slept, had left him in order to prepare David's breakfast, and during her absence he intended to test his ability in walking. The doctor had just called, and had left upon the table a bundle of Paris papers for David; for the old man, though simple in tastes and requirements, and content to dwell "far from the madding crowd," delighted in learning of the doings in that Paris of which he had so often heard.

Bourrienne, hoping to gain from them some enlightenment upon the affairs of his particular circle, staggered to the table and, having secured the papers, returned to the bed to devour their contents as only a man who has

been deaf to outside matters for many long weeks may devour a gleam of light from the living world. Upon opening a *Journal* of recent date, he was startled at seeing his own name among some legal notices at the top of the page. His hands trembled visibly as he held the sheet to the light and read the article through from beginning to end. It was dated "Pierrepont" and read: "Owing to the unsettled state of affairs over the estate of the late Philippe de Bourrienne, no legal business has as yet been transacted; it is known, however, that the property will pass to the only son, Paul de Bourrienne, who has recently sailed for England. The latter, while driving from Paris to this town three weeks ago, having been summoned here suddenly by the late sad event, met with a shocking and serious accident. His carriage was upset, and a friend who accompanied him was fatally injured. He himself sustained rather serious injuries, from which it is hoped he has fully recovered."

"Dead! My God!" he gasped, starting forward in the bed. "While I have been lying here oblivious to it all. Oh God, had I but known! I could have reached his bedside some way, clasped his dying hand, and whispered a few words of comfort ere the end. Poor old man," and as the horror occasioned by the shocking intelligence gradually sub-

sided, his eyes became suffused with tears. He pictured to himself his father, weak from worry and illness, craving for his son's presence to soothe his dying moments; and bitterly he rated himself for the negligence and want of forethought on his part which had brought about this unhappy climax of affairs. Oh, could he but live the last few years over again and manifest, by his strict adherence to filial duty, that the actions of his former reckless life had been occasioned by thoughtlessness rather than a lack of respect.

And poor Maret, too, was it possible that he also was dead? Poor fellow, his troubles were over then. Ah, it was a bitter blow for a sick man; God give him strength to bear it. He was about to spring from his bed and hurry on to Pierrepont, despite the endeavors of the good people of the farm-house should they try to restrain him, when a name that caused the blood to course more quickly through his veins caught his eyes. He leaned eagerly forward and, with rapidly drawn breath, read a little article in the society notes, the same over which Madame Carbonnet had chuckled a day or two previously: "Monsieur and Madame Carbonnet announce the engagement of their niece, Mlle. Julie Carbonnet, to M. Alexandre Paget of this city."

A dull red flush mounted to Bourrienne's

face, and for a moment his lips were pressed together like a vise. Tears of surprise, anger, jealousy and wounded pride gathered in his eyes as he looked upon the astounding words, and from thence all else was forgotten—his father's death, his friend's sad fate, his own unenviable condition; all were as nothing compared to this. The girl he loved with all the passion of his soul, whom he had hoped to make his wife before another year had passed on its way, had made a pitiful dupe of him and a farce of his love; had shown him less consideration than she would show a dog. Good God! had he not suffered enough without this? Oh, well might Southey cry in derision, "When was woman true!" Then oath upon oath burst from his lips. He could curse duplicity in woman.

He would go to her, he would force his presence upon her, and with all the eloquence that his tongue could command, he would hurl contempt and pity at them both—at this Paget, the little sneak (he had always thought him a pretty decent sort of fellow, and had even entertained him at his rooms) and at her, the coquette who recked a man's love at no higher value than a string of beads or a flimsy gown—nay, not so much, for these, at least, would be held too dear to be trampled beneath her feet. Yes, he would go to her, he would be calm and

haughty; she should see nothing in his looks to triumph over, and he should tell her what he thought of such vile deceit, such unwomanly principle, such a fickle, shallow soul; and then, if at his words she betrayed remorse and shame, and begged upon her knees for forgiveness, he would spurn her from him as he would a loathsome object, and would rush away somewhere, to the devil probably, he did not care just where.

He was passing through that frenzied stage through which the down-trodden lover must invariably pass ere he "arrive the happy isle" of calm and unflurried reasoning. Was not his life blasted, ruined? Better had he suffered poor Maret's fate than live to meet grief and horror such as this.

And so like an insane man he lay there heaping frenzied epithets upon the unoffending head of all creation, cursing his own ill-starred existence, and vowing extravagant vengeance upon the whole house of Carbonnet. Then came the bitter reaction, the more sober moment, when the angry, wounded, retaliating nature gave place to calmer, gentler and sadder thoughts; when he looked his loss squarely in the face and realized what it meant to him. Then it was that the sterner nature broke down; and weak, exhausted, with pitiful, agonized eyes, and pale, drawn features, young

Bourrienne lay upon his bed, devoutly wishing that he had never been permitted to see the light of day, or, being permitted, had died in happy, blessed infancy.

And so Janet found him, and the good woman wept to see his condition. All the work of recuperation of the last few weeks had been for naught, and all for a woman, "destructive, damnable, deceitful woman." But he recovered. Man is like his mother earth; a damaging deluge, a violent eruption, a center-probing shock but serves to muster forth the regenerating properties hidden in his veins. When the crash comes he forgets physical self, he has something more potent, more fascinating, more interesting to dwell upon—injured vanity. He pities himself and nurses his smarting wounds; he begins to idealize his state; his soul has died a martyr's death, but he lives to bedeck with idolatrous emblems of an ill-fated passion the grave in which that soul is laid.

Thus it has ever been since the blind boy's arrow first probed its mark, and thus it must ever be while unswerving, unadventurous man clings to the hackneyed belief that a precedent embalms a principle, and fears to venture forth upon the unbeaten track where rejected suitors, jilted lovers and others of down-trodden mankind parade in suits of brazen mail, invul-

nerable to the "slings and arrows" of feminine duplicity.

A sort of dogged persistency had entered Bourrienne's disposition; the impatience and restlessness had vanished, and he lay calmly awaiting the time when he should be sufficiently recovered to leave the farmhouse for—he did not know exactly where. He must be up and away; he knew that at any rate. The papers had cited him as travelling in England. He could do that; yes, he would get as far away from his sorrows as tide and money would carry him. Let Julie Carbonnet go her way. Manly pride had won the fight. He would neither go to her nor write. He was not a puppet to be used at woman's caprice.

He no longer asked for his father or Jean Maret; they were all but forgotten; and Janet, taking it as a favorable sign, rejoiced at what she considered his returning faculties, and she too, fearing to counteract his recovery by alluding to the companion of his great misfortune, the man whose welfare had so disturbed the sufferer in his delirium that he confounded his own personality with the other's, resolved to refrain from mentioning his name altogether.

At last he was in a condition to leave his bed, and forthwith Janet carried him the clothes which David had with great pains and

deliberation selected in the village. Bourrienne could not forbear to smile as he beheld the clumsy-looking garments, but as Janet had assured him that his others had been dilapidated beyond renovation in the wreck, he was obliged to make a virtue of necessity and put them on. Greatly did he lament the fact that he had no money with which to repay those good people for the care and kindness with which they had treated him—that too, along with his papers and other possessions, had been demolished in the wreck. He was obliged to even further rely upon their generosity for railway fare to Versailles, from which place he could communicate by message with his bankers in Paris. In vain did David and his amiable wife declare that they had had remuneration enough for their humble services; he, believing that in the goodness of their hearts they referred to the satisfactory return that their own consciences gave them for bestowing kindness upon another, would not hear their expressions of denial, but promised that as soon as he reached Versailles they should be rewarded. He had abandoned the idea of visiting Pierrepont; naught but sorrow and grief and evidence of his desolation would meet him there. No, he would remain away; he cared not how the estate was settled, now that the only woman he had ever cared

to make his wife had become untrue. Let Du Maurier arrange everything; he was tired of life.

Upon the twenty-first day of September Bourrienne sailed for Australia.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN AUSTRALIAN NIGHT.

In the rather unpretentious living room of a two-storied frame house in the midst of an Australian clearing, John Elginbrod and his daughter Mary sat at a white deal table, preparing the pay-list for the miners, and incidentally discussing the probability of a company from Ballarat taking up the claim of the uninhabited tract that stretched far away to the west of their own little settlement. The night had set in, and with it a heavy downpour of rain, which beat against the small-paned windows and thin roof of the dwelling with a dismal cadence. A bright fire of pine logs burned upon the neatly swept hearth, for although the Australian summer had just set in, the heavy rain-storms in the coast colonies, though of infrequent occurrence, are unusually severe, and bring with them a disagreeable chill, whether the season be summer or winter.

Mary was a bright, pretty girl of seventeen, with laughing blue eyes, red lips, and hair as rich in coloring as the Australian ore for which her father's miners labored from morn till

night. Born in the heart of the Australian forest, she had known no other home during her short life, but had lived there since her mother's death, alone with her father, to whom she was an idol, a treasure of far greater value than that for which, with the sturdy persistency of his race, he was spending his life labor.

At a gathering five miles from her home, honored by the designation of school, and presided over by a stern-faced individual of the itinerant pedagogue type, she had managed to secure an education in keeping with her surroundings; but Mary, being ambitious, was not satisfied with a superficial smattering of knowledge, and begged her father to procure books for her in the city, in order that she might educate herself. These were her chief companions, for she had no others save her father, and the rough miners who sometimes dropped in for a few minutes' chat over a mug of cider or a glass of old Scotch ale which John Elginbrod ordered from the city every six months. These rough fellows looked upon Mary as a mere child, but there was not one among them who did not worship the girl for her beauty and kindly ways, and who would not go out of his way to accommodate her slightest whim. She had no suitors, for the miners were much older than she, and of far too rough a type to be

considered fit associates for John Elginbrod's daughter. But despite the girl's lonely life, she was always happy and cheerful, and seemed like a ray of sunlight in the rough old mining settlement. Her mother was of gentle birth, and from her Mary inherited with her beautiful face a refined and lady-like manner, which, among the women of the pioneer settlements is a rare if not unheard of quality.

Having finished her part of the work, that of checking off the long list of names upon the mining sheet, Mary arose to replenish the fire, when a sharp rap at the door caused the iron tongs to fall with a clang at her feet.

"What! startled, girl?" asked her father, as he leisurely folded the roll of bills and placed them in the inner pocket of his rough coat.

"Yes, for a moment, father; it came so unexpectedly. Pray, who can be abroad a night like this, in the pelting rain?"

John Elginbrod, having examined the priming of his gun with deliberate care, walked slowly to the door and, pushing back the iron bolts, swung it open on its heavy hinges. For a moment the change from the lighted room to the darkness without blinded his eyes, but when they became accustomed to the blackness, he distinguished the form of a man leaning against the horse post before the entrance.

"Pardon me, sir, for disturbing your household at such an hour," said a voice that struck pleasantly upon Mary's ears, "but believing the day would be fine, I started to walk from Clunes this morning and, as you see, have been overtaken by the storm. If I can gain a night's lodging beneath your roof, sir, I am prepared to pay you liberally for it."

"Step in, sir, step in. We have to be careful in these parts ye know on account of the black stragglers and bushrangers, and so at times we seem wanting in hospitality; but any man around about these woods can tell ye that John Elginbrod never denied a man a night's shelter. Draw near the fire, sir, ye must be wet through in that garb. Mary, fetch the stranger a hot drink and get ready some supper. I 'low, sir, that if ye started from Clunes this morning, ye didn't go much for dining on the way, unless old Jim Dawson up at Red Sandy gave ye a hand-out. They're mighty scary in these parts just now. Ye hail from London, perhaps?" The old man, glad of a chance to display his volubility, like all beings whose lives are spent in comparative loneliness, rattled on in his friendly way, while Mary hastened about preparing a meal for the unfortunate traveller.

The latter drew near the fire, shivering visibly. His clothes were of fashionable cut and

of the richest material, but the driving rain had penetrated to the body, causing the wearer no small degree of discomfort. As if suddenly becoming aware that there was a lady present, he lifted his hand and removed the broad slouch hat he wore, revealing the handsome features and dark hair of Paul De Bourrienne.

"No," he replied, "I am a Frenchmen, and have come this way in search of a mining settlement. Perhaps you can give me some information upon the subject; if I can find the sort of a place I am looking for, I shall buy up a tract and begin operations."

Both Mary and her father stared at the stranger. In fact, the former had not taken her eyes from his face since he had removed the sombrero and displayed his aristocratic features. Accustomed to the miners of the settlement, she never dreamed that man could possess such refinement as this, and she wondered if all city people were like him; and he was a Frenchman, too, and yet could speak such perfect English. John Elginbrod studied him intently also, not because he had admired his striking appearance or refinement of manner—indeed, such things ever passed unnoticed before his uncultured eyes; but because, since the stranger had stated his errand in those parts, he saw in him a solution of the problem

which had bothered Mary and himself for some time past. The vast tract of land to the west of their clearing belonged by right of claim to John Elginbrod, and was considered rich in Australian ores. But John Elginbrod lacked the capital to begin mining operations upon so broad a scale, and so concluded that the only course left for him would be to interest some capitalist from the city, and thus get the mining process under way; then all would be plain sailing. In the young man before him he saw a probable exterminator of his difficulties, and resolved to solicit him to remain at his house in order that he might propound the scheme to him during his leisure moments.

"Ay, sir, I reckon I can give ye all the information ye want in regard to settling, but I should advise ye to get those wet clothes off, and go to bed as soon as ye finish eating, unless it's malaria fever ye're after."

"Both you and your wife, sir, are very kind. It does one's heart good to meet with hospitality such as yours," replied Bourrienne.

"My wife, man! why, she's my daughter!" and the old man threw back his head and laughed. For the first time Bourrienne raised his eyes to the girl's face, and was surprised at its beauty. Mary, with just the suspicion of a pout, turned her back upon the stranger and

began piling the dishes upon a tray, preparatory to removing them, soliloquizing the while that, despite certain persons' well-bred appearance, they could be decidedly ill-bred.

After the first glance, Bourrienne seemed to have forgotten all about the girl, and having partaken of the wholesome repast, drew his chair to the table and entered into a discussion of the mining question with her father. So interested and loquacious did the old man become upon the topic, that long after Mary had retired to rest and the hands upon the little old-fashioned clock upon the shelf had pointed to the hour of midnight, they sat before the fire, the old miner laying before his guest with his characteristic enthusiasm the advantages to be derived from settling the Western Tract, as it was called, and opening up to the light of day the vast field of valuable ore which he believed lay beneath the surface.

"Ye do not appear in very robust health, if I may so, stranger. The air in these parts will build ye up in no time."

"No, I must confess that I am not in first-class condition. I was the victim of an accident not long ago, and have not fully recovered as yet. One reason for my leaving France was to recuperate."

"Ay, I thought as much. Well, this is no

way to begin, lad; ye should have been in bed these three hours." So saying, he took the lamp from the table and led the way up the narrow staircase to the floor above, and having ushered Bourrienne into the best room the house afforded, bade him good night with a promise to call him early the next morning.

The chamber in which Bourrienne found himself was a pretty, airy place, and showed by its scrupulous cleanliness that a woman's hand had been recently at work there; but Bourrienne saw none of these things; he was tired and ill, and looked upon the home-like chamber merely as a refuge from the storm. 'Tis true that the bed with its snowy linen appeared inviting and pleasant to his eyes, and he stretched his tired limbs upon it, hoping that the fatigue from his long journey would bring sleep to the brain that for weeks had not known that blessed forgetfulness. But the face of Julie Carbonnet was ever before him, and with it came the maddening thought that she would soon belong to another, causing his heart to ache and his head to throb in the grief and wretchedness of his desolation. Not till the early hours of morning did sleep steal over his confused senses and bring him the welcome oblivion for which he craved.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY ELGINBROD.

THE next morning Bourrienne awoke feeling but little refreshed, but resolving to enter with heart and soul into any work which chance afforded him, in order that his sorrow might be obliterated somewhat by the taxing of all his energies in some one direction, and upon labor that had some definite object. Too long had he remained without a purpose, without an ambition in the world; and now that his mind had become a prey to unhappy thoughts, to demons of rage, grief and jealousy, he knew that long-suffering nature, deprived of her rightful requisites, would give way beneath the strain, did he not endeavor to ease his mental anguish by keeping his brain in constant activity. He had a vague recollection of having read or heard somewhere, words to the effect that employment was essential to the happiness of mortals, and that indolence was naught but the mother of misery; and though at the time he failed from want of practical experience to appreciate their meaning, it now came upon him in

dread reality, and he felt that he must do something. True, no particular object had presented itself as yet, but since his conversation with old John Elginbrod, he had hopes of finding it in the Australian gold-fields.

He arose, and, drawing back the muslin curtains of the chamber window, looked out upon the surrounding country. A cultured eye such as Bourrienne's could not but be charmed by the native wildness of the scenery. The rain had long since ceased, leaving the world in that state of freshness and beauty always to be seen in the early morning when the day is at its best. As far as the eye could reach endless forests of evergreen stretched wild and luxuriant in their primitive state of grandeur, save where to the right a broad, open tract of comparatively barren soil gave evidence of the site of mining operations. John Elginbrod's clearing was on the southern slope of the Victoria Colony, but too far inland for one to view the endless waste of waters as they lapped the Australian shore; nevertheless, their delightful breezes penetrated the evergreen woods, bringing relief and comfort in their welcome breath.

The cottage, a two-story frame one, over which some clinging southern plant had crept in wild confusion, presented a far more inviting spectacle than on the previous night,

when the intense darkness and driving rain had converted it into a black shape from which emanated a single ray of light. From his window Bourrienne could see that a broad piazza surrounded it upon three sides, thus affording a welcome retreat during the scorching heat of the Australian summer. The grass-plot before the door had been transformed into a veritable region of brilliancy and beauty by several species of hardy, old-fashioned blossoms, peculiar to the dry soil of the country.

"A peaceful scene," he murmured, "fit dwelling-place for these honest, simple people; would that I could forget my past life and become a part of them. What would I not give for a little of that girl's lightheartedness," he added, as Mary, arrayed in a dainty gingham dress and sunbonnet, passed through the gate and on in the direction of the woods, singing blithely as she went. He absently watched her graceful figure out of sight, and then turning from the window, descended to the room below.

Everything was in the same state of neatness and comfort that had prevailed the night before. Owing to the warmth of the day, however, the fire had been allowed to burn out, and the hearth had been swept and polished. The room was deserted, and Bourri-

enne, presuming that his host had gone to the mines, drew a chair to the window and sat down to await his return. No thought of breakfast entered his head, for during the last few weeks his appetite had deserted him, and what little food he managed to eat was distasteful. Old Janet had all but wept over his inability to taste the delicate repasts which her motherly hands had prepared for him, and lifted her eyes many a time in speechless wonder, when she saw upon what a meagre portion he managed to sustain life. Being far too wise, however, to endeavor to minister to a "mind diseased" through that capricious organ, the stomach, she considerately left all to the sure, though ofttimes slow, remedies of nature.

A zephyr-like breeze, laden with the sweet, refreshing odor of the pine woods, played about Bourrienne's forehead, as with head resting upon his hand he leaned against the window ledge. The scent of the flowers in the garden recalled to his mind the hour he had spent with Julie beneath the apple trees, and his eyes grew dim as he realized that never again should such a scene be enacted. He wondered why he could not drive the thought of the girl from his mind; she seemed in some way to have bewitched his senses, for her face was ever before him, during his waking hours and in his dreams. Would it ever be thus, he

wondered, or would forgetfulness or indifference come to his aid and relieve him of his weight of sorrow?

His thoughts were diverted from these sad reflections by the entrance of John Elginbrod, followed by two rough but honest-looking fellows, who, in response to the old man's introduction, bowed awkwardly to Bourrienne, and ventured some remark about the fineness of the day.

"I intended, lad, that ye should sleep until noon-time, for ye looked about played out last night; but as ye took matters into yer own hands and got up, I reckon ye feel a bit rested, eh? And I don't know but what y're right too, for ye know the saying, 'Early to bed, and early to rise'," and the old man chuckled at his own wisdom.

"Yes, I could not sleep, so dressed and came down here; but do not let me interfere with any business you may have on hand, for I can look out for myself. From the chamber window I noticed the location of the mines, and was intending to explore them myself did you not return."

"Nonsense, lad, we'll have breakfast and then go together. I 'low ye never saw a mine before and will be none the worse of a guide. Now Dick and Bill Soule, here, can give ye more information than would sink a ship, and

as for John Elginbrod, well, though he does say it himself as shouldn't, he knows a thing or two about mines and mining—eh lass?"

This last to Mary who had just entered and, having greeted the miners and bade Bourrienne a shy good-morning, set a basket of fruit and flowers upon the table, and started to prepare breakfast.

"What, father! you are not boasting of your varied accomplishments to the stranger! I am positively ashamed of you. What shall we do to him, Bill Soule, to cure him of his conceited habits?" she replied, as she gave the old man his good-morning kiss and disappeared in the kitchen.

"That gal of mine is a hustler, boys," observed her father smiling proudly. "Been up since six o'clock, I 'low, rummaging the woods for that wild stuff there, though what beauty she can find in such weeds is a mystery to me."

"Ay, Elginbrod, she's a fine lass, and God knows, as fair as any of those blossoms she loves so well; not a creature in the woods round about here but what knows her and will come at her call; even those red devils, the dingoes, pass her quietly by. Faith, John, I don't believe the wildest brute in the Australian forest would harm that gal of yourn."

The other miner, a short, thick-set little fellow, with fiery red hair and a scarred but

good-natured looking face, joined in with praises equally fervent in behalf of Mary Elginbrod, and dropped into an exciting tale of her bravery when a band of blacks laid siege to their settlement three years before, and she but a child at the time. In the midst of his story breakfast was set before them, to which the hardy miners did ample justice; and Bourrienne, though feeling little inclination to eat, could not help but relish the wholesome though plain viands of his host's table.

At the close of the meal he left the cottage with John Elginbrod and the two miners to make a tour of the mines. The former, true to his assertion, proved an efficient as well as voluble guide, and by the time they had completed their explorations, and the sun was but a few minutes from the meridian, Bourrienne's brain swam beneath an ominous weight of mining generalities and technicalities, among which "adit levels," "quartz reefs," "aqueous" and "alluvial strata," "vertical, longitudinal and sloping shafts," and "auriferous drifts," were mingled in lamentable and hopeless confusion. He was surprised, however, at his interest in the matter, for of late he had felt all ambition and energy die within him. Pleased to be able to gratify the old miner's whim, although he doubted the materialization of the dreams of fabulous wealth which the

latter was sure lay beneath the surface of the Western Tract, he resolved to furnish the capital, a mere pittance in Bourrienne's estimation, and have the work of excavation started. It would serve as a foil for his thoughts, besides bringing happiness to others; and as long as he must live somewhere on earth, that somewhere might just as well be Australia as any other place.

He had arrived at the settlement upon Monday. Upon the following Saturday men had arrived from Melbourne to make arrangements for land surveys, etc., and practical operations were to begin in another month. That evening as he thrust his hat over his eyes and strolled down the woody country road that led through the settlement, there was a peculiar, satisfied feeling in young Bourrienne's breast; a feeling that he could not recall having ever before experienced. It was something new, this playing the philanthropist, and he confessed to himself that he rather liked it. Ever since the age when its significance was made plain to him, money had been at his command to use as he liked, but never until now had he known what it was to derive pleasure from an act of benevolence. Not that he had heretofore possessed the characteristics of a Gaspard, or the narrow, close-handed traits of too many of his class; but in the set

where he was accustomed to move there were few opportunities for philanthropy or benevolence, and Bourrienne was of far too careless and easy-going a disposition to go in search of such opportunities. He could not remember of ever having let a beggar go by him empty-handed, or of ever refusing aid when it was required of him; but this was a different case. Perhaps the gratitude and appreciation that greeted the present act had awakened these thoughts in his breast. Certain it was that an unwonted train of reflections was passing through the young man's mind. He could still feel in imagination the honest, grateful grasp of the hand, and hear the fervent "God bless ye, my boy," when he assured old John Elginbrod that the scheme over which he had worked and planned for years should at last be accomplished. And the daughter, too; all day there had been an unmistakable look of gratitude in her eyes, and more than once he thought he detected tears in their depths as his glance encountered hers at the supper-table. All this was embarrassing, still it was not by any means unpleasant. Bourrienne was not at all displeased with that week's work.

Leaving the road after a few paces over its rough, uneven bed, he entered the woods through a sheltered by-path, and continued his course toward the west, from which point

a vivid crimson sun, portent of the morrow's heat, was gradually disappearing. The way was comparatively clear and light, and the delightful odors of air and earth lent an added charm to the almost fairy-like scene. Stately tree-ferns nodded along the way, clinging Australian creepers met and canopied the narrow path, and clusters of drooping palm growths encircled the spreading, snake-like roots of the tall pines and cedars, and carpeted with delicate green the dark earth of the forest.

Scarcely conscious of its grace and beauty, Bourrienne penetrated through the bower-like region of fern and vine for over a quarter of a mile, then leaning upon the stump of a dead cedar, he looked wonderingly about him. The undergrowth had ceased, and the Australian bush, that great handiwork of God, lay stretched in all its primeval grandeur before him—a forest, gloomy, solemn, wild and unbroken, its silvered trunks darting erect, like Corinthian columns, from the black earth beneath, and upholding with their giant strength the dome-like, impenetrable canopy of a temple of Nature's God. No stunted member, no unsightly growth, impaired the awful symmetry of that scene; the architects of the forest had for once stooped to employ the level and the rule.

Bourrienne stood motionless; the interest and admiration which the more airy forms of nature had failed to evoke, were now called into vivid and lively play; a feeling akin to awe stirred within his breast. "What frail, humble creatures we are after all," he murmured. "Man has but to look upon a scene like this to be reminded of his insignificance. A forest of Arden! a grand, a glorious place! would that I could be an Orlando, and hang an assurance of my love upon every tree, and know that her bright eyes would see and read. O Julie, Julie, why have you done this thing?" and with a sigh of anguish he bowed his head upon the vine-clad tree stump.

A light step behind him, a scarcely perceptible touch upon his arm, and Bourrienne turned with a start. Mary Elginbrod stood before him, her yellow curls ruffled by the breeze, and an uncertain, puzzled look upon her face. "I have followed you," she said, "because I wished to talk to you down here away from the cottage, where nobody will hear or see us."

Bourrienne denoted by a slight bow that he was at her service, but an uncomfortable feeling had assailed him and he wished himself a hundred miles from the spot. Expressions of gratitude were tiresome and superfluous he thought, and he would far rather have had John

Elginbrod and his daughter accept his assistance and say nothing, than be burdened with any extravagant effusions of thankfulness. He shifted from one foot to the other uneasily, and waited for her to continue.

"The night you arrived, you will remember, you happened to remark that you had come this way in search of an investment of some kind that would provide occupation for your mind; and later when I heard you and father discussing the question far into the night, I knew that he would eventually try to interest you in the excavation of the tract of land that lies along the west of the settlement. Nor was I mistaken. At noon to-day I heard from his own lips, that not only had he done so, but that business transactions had taken place between you which would insure the speedy opening up of the mines. I was grateful, Heaven only knows how grateful, for his sake, but at the same time I experienced a feeling of guilt and uncertainty; guilt, because I felt in my soul that I was looking on in silence while an unjust deal was being made, and uncertainty, because although I felt moved to speak to you, regard for my father held me silent."

Bourrienne opened his eyes in lazy surprise as she continued. What was the girl coming at anyway? he wondered.

"You will understand my feelings when I

tell you that for years and years the opening up of that barren tract has been his one aim, his sole ambition. He has planned, labored and schemed over it, until at times I have feared that his mind would give way beneath the strain, and that he would become a hopeless monomaniac."

Bourrienne feeling that he must say something, ventured a remark about her uneasiness upon that score being at an end, now that her father's hopes were about to be realized.

"It is not that," she replied, drawing nearer and looking uneasily about her as if she feared being overheard. "It is not that alone that worries me, sir. You have come to our home, a stranger, showing by your manner and appearance that you know nothing of the rough side of life and its difficulties, and, in the goodness of your heart, have listened to and gratified an old man's whim. Is it not right then, that I, knowing your ignorance of mines and mining, should tell you what everybody in the settlement, excepting my father, believes—that capital invested in the Western Tract might as well be thrown to the four winds of heaven?" She paused with a little choke in her voice, and her hands played nervously with a pine spray which she was busily divesting of its needles.

Bourrienne was silent. He was studying

the face before him, now almost concealed in the shadows of the approaching evening. A new train of thoughts was at work in his brain. Surely this was a red-letter day in his life for new experiences and reflections. Before him stood a girl whose words and manner betrayed a depth of character that he had believed no mortal capable of possessing. The trembling lips, the uncertain utterance with which she spoke of her father, the suppressed feeling with which she told of his trials and disappointments, his hopes and ambitions, portrayed to Bourrienne's mind the fact that her love for the enterprising old miner was of the deepest and most fervent nature ; yet notwithstanding that love, and the anxiety she experienced for his health and welfare, she had set aside his interests and her own in the matter, in order to prevent what seemed in her eyes a dealing of dishonesty and imposition. A peculiar smile played about Bourrienne's lips as he looked down upon the childish figure and beheld the anxious, worried expression that rested upon the features. What a relentless warfare had been carried on within that puzzled brain, ere conscience had won the day and filial sentiments had been subdued if not routed. He remarked the painful uneasiness of the girl's manner as she strove to do what in her mind seemed right, and he felt that the

task she had undertaken was by no means an easy one. He must say something, he must quiet her anxiety at once in his behalf; but how, without seeming egotistical or absurd? He paced the path for a little way, and then resumed his former position, his eyes riveted upon the ground and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. "What if he whom you had favored with this disinterested anxiety was, contrary to your belief, entering into this scheme with his eyes wide open and his senses but little dazzled by his great expectations?" "Confound it!" he thought, "that isn't just what I wanted to say, but it will have to do."

Mary's face brightened, and her eyes were raised in eloquence to Bourrienne's face.

"Then he is a man in a thousand," she said.

Bourrienne laughed. "That is a distinction indeed. Had we not better be moving toward the house? It seems to be growing late," he said, anxious to escape further embarrassment. "Did I not have you for a guide, I should undoubtedly lose my way in this dense growth."

"Yes, we will go back," she replied. "I think I understand things better now. I shall not thank you, sir, for what you have done, for somehow I do not think you care for that sort of thing." Turning, she retraced her

steps through the now darkened path, Bourrienne leisurely following. Upon reaching the road they walked side by side as if by mutual agreement, but both seemed to waive the necessity of speech. As Bourrienne held the gate back for her to pass through, he made some remark about the beauty of the night. Old John Elginbrod came out upon the porch to meet her as she walked up the path.

"Gallivanting, as usual, girl," he said jokingly. "Why don't ye stay at home for a change, and keep yer old father company?"

"I shall, father, after to-night, but the breeze felt so cool and refreshing that I couldn't resist a walk to the trail and back. It has tired me a little, though, so I am going to bed, to be up bright and early in the morning. Good night, father. Good night—Mr. Bourrienne."

There was no response from the gate, and turning as she entered the house, Mary saw that the stranger, with his hat in his hand, was leaning against the gate-post and gazing moodily away into the darkness. The moonlight falling full upon his profile gave a strange, unnatural pallor to the features, and a silvery lustre to the dark hair. Was she mistaken, or was there an expression of despair upon that quiet face?

CHAPTER XV.

BALLARAT.

MARY ELGINBROD was leaning over the rough little fence of the enclosure, watching the long train of wagons laden with cedar logs, as they passed on their way to Ballarat. The sight was a familiar one to her, yet she never tired of admiring the sturdy Australian horses as they toiled bravely along beneath their heavy burdens, or of waving a greeting to the brawny, dark-skinned drivers who trudged behind. They all knew the girl, for more than one had been refreshed by a glass of cool cider at the cottage kitchen, or by a luncheon of bread and cheese when the day's labor had been more difficult than usual, and they had been detained in the forest until after sundown.

To-day the line was moving more briskly than usual, and Bourrienne, who was lounging in the cottage door, vainly trying to forget the heat, heard Mary call to one of the men and ask if a rain-storm had been predicted. The reply he did not catch, but it evidently was of some importance, for he saw her vault

the fence and run down the slope to the wagons. For a few moments she seemed to be listening attentively to the driver, who was gesticulating excitedly; then she turned and shading her eyes gazed along the road to the westward.

"Poor fellow," he heard her say, "you had better carry him into the house; he'll die if you keep on to Ballarat in this heat."

In a few minutes a log-cart appeared around the curve of the dusty road, and upon it were seated two swarthy Australians supporting in their arms a third, whose head was thrown back, the eyes closed and the face and lips bloodless. They carried him up the path and laid him upon the old-fashioned couch in the little sitting-room. The poor fellow had been crushed by a falling log, and just how serious his injuries were the little group gathered about him were at a loss to know. There was no doctor nearer than Clunes, and not one of the rough fellows seemed capable of aiding the injured man. Some days had passed since the little incident in the forest, and he and Mary had not spoken together alone since. Whether this was owing to bashfulness upon Mary's part or reticence upon his own, he could not have told. At any rate, he had felt no desire to converse with the girl, or with anyone, for that matter, and derived a certain

dogged satisfaction from silence and unsociability. Indeed, so unreasonable was he in his moodiness, that he would have considered any move upon his part toward conversation, as an injustice to himself and the cause which had brought him thither.

To-day, however, he drew near and addressed her. Should he call Miss Elginbrod's father? Perhaps he would know where they could obtain assistance, or could tell them what to do. Perhaps this would be of some use, and he offered her his brandy flask.

No, there was no need of calling her father, she said. He knew little or nothing about such things. She had already cut away the sleeve of the coarse, blue shirt, and with strips she had torn from her flimsy apron, was binding up the lacerated arm. It was a painful task for a woman, for at the sight of the bleeding limb even the sturdy laborers were sickened. Bourrienne watched her as, with lips tightly compressed and cheeks noticeably pale, she bent over the distasteful work, and a feeling of admiration possessed him. He found himself comparing this girl, with the bright, disordered locks falling about her childish face, and simple gingham gown now stained with blood, with the women he had been wont for years to associate with. He looked at the little brown trembling hands as they worked

industriously with the linen bandages, and he thought of other hands—hands that had sought for no more arduous task than to raise dainty cigarettes to carmine lips, or to throw kisses to love-sick adorers. How out of place would La Devereaux or La Villemain look in a scene like this. Nine out of ten such demoiselles would have shrunk from it for fear of jeopardizing their ill-gotten finery. Then he thought of another face, that of Julie Carbonnet, and a cloud passed over his features. How like an angel she would have looked in Mary Elginbrod's place; how fitting would such a rôle have been for her.

Mary looked up and motioned for him to bathe the sufferer's face with water. He secured a basinful from the old pump in the kitchen, and set clumsily to work.

Throughout the painful process the poor fellow had lain in a half stupor of pain, but not a groan had escaped him, and his dark, agonized eyes were fixed in adoring gratitude upon Mary's face. It was over at last. She had done her best, and it would suffice until a doctor could be reached. She again held brandy to his lips, and he smiled and pressed her hand. She urged him to stay with them until medical aid could be obtained; but no, though he was grateful, he must be carried on to Ballarat. A mother and sister awaited him

at home; he would tell them about her, and they would always bless the name of Mary Elginbrod.

She smiled as she watched the heavy wagon rumble away, and then turned and ascended the stairs to her room to remove the stains of her work. Bourrienne, feeling strangely awkward and unimportant, began to set the disordered room to rights. He rolled the stiff little couch into its accustomed place against the wall, incidentally rolling the braided rug into a disorderly heap beneath it; placed the straight-back chairs in rows around the table, and carried the basin into the kitchen after having first thrust the towels and scraps of linen behind the hall door. On returning, he surveyed his work. "She will like that," he thought. Then taking a magazine he sat down at the window to read.

In the course of a few minutes Mary came down the stairs, but instead of entering the sitting-room she passed out upon the porch. Evidently she had forgotten the disorder she had left within; or perhaps she disliked to intrude upon the conservative man at the window, whose taciturn manner she had begun to dread.

"How little it takes to amuse a woman," Bourrienne thought, as he watched her seat herself beneath a clump of trees at the end of

the garden, with a pack of cards spread out upon the grass before her. What a peculiar mingling of the child and woman was there. The gentle, tender manner with which she had ministered to the suffering man, had vanished as completely as the stains upon her gown, and with a pleased, childish abandonment she sought recreation in the girlish amusement of reading her fortune in a pack of cards. A feeling of pity stole over Bourrienne, and he murmured half aloud: "Poor child, this must be a deuce of a lonely life for her. I suppose I'm making a cad of myself by being so confoundedly unsociable, but I hardly know what to talk to the girl about."

He sighed wearily and set the book down upon the table. A feeling of extreme loneliness, and dissatisfaction with himself and everybody in general, had bothered him all that day, causing him to look his distemper quietly and squarely in the face. Why should he be living the life of a recluse when he might by a little exertion render existence more agreeable for himself, and perhaps for the people around him as well? for surely it must disturb their pleasure to have such a gloomy, taciturn creature as himself in their midst. He resolved to speak to the girl; to say something that should seem pleasant or at least sociable.

Mary looked up with a smile as he approached and looked over her shoulder. "You're two shy, Miss Elginbrod," he said, and then he bit his lips in confusion, as he realized that a person unfamiliar with poker terms might consider him unduly familiar upon short acquaintance. Mary's blue eyes opened in puzzled surprise for a moment; then he explained and she laughed good-naturedly. Did he think she was gambling with her shadow? That would be rather unprofitable work, she feared. No, she was only reading her fortune.

"Oh, a follower of Carmen, I see; and what do they tell you, if I may ask?"

"Oh, the same old story! I shall cross the water within three—whether days, weeks or years, I cannot tell; be married within two, and get a letter from some one who has lots and lots of money. It's foolish, but it helps to pass the time. I am often very lonely here. Shall I tell your fortune, Mr. Bourrienne?"

No, it would be unpropitious, he feared, and then he might be worried. Let them try some game instead. Did she know how to play jackpot?

No, but she could play casino, and euchre and Truth.

"I have no knowledge of any of those games; how do you play Truth?"

"Sit down here and I'll show you. There should be three or more to play it right, but I made up a way of my own for two, so that I could play with father when I wanted to know what he was going to bring me from town."

Bourrienne looked decidedly puzzled, but sat down opposite her and awaited instructions.

"You see I draw a card from you, and if I can match it with one in my hand, I may ask you some question which you are bound to answer truthfully; and you can do the same when you match with a card from my hand. It's something like Old Maid, you know."

Bourrienne decided that Truth must be a very exciting game.

"Now you shall have the first chance; you may draw any card you want to."

Bourrienne drew and matched. What the deuce should he ask her? he wondered. A smile flitted across his features. He was back in old Paris— the square of grass before him had suddenly been transformed into a table of green baize, and over it leaned a trio of handsome women; women with heavy, languid eyes, and painted lips; arrayed in modish, gauzy gowns cut indecently low; women whose white, unroughened hands and powdered arms had a grasping, repulsive look as they

gathered in their greedy spoils. What would Pauline Villemain or La Devereaux say if they should see him now, seated upon the grass before this demure little Australian maiden, industriously engaged in a game of Truth. He was so long silent that Mary suggested that it did not make any difference what question he asked her. He was quite at a loss. He thought of Mlle. Devereaux—what should he ask her in such a case? A thousand things loomed up in his mind, but he realized that they were neither correct nor appropriate here. Truth was quite a game after all. What dark secrets in Mademoiselle's past might he not unearth? But then, Mademoiselle was not noted for her strict veracity, and it was doubtful whether the game of Truth would produce any great metamorphosis in that direction. He thought studiously for a few moments, and then an idea seemed to suggest itself to him. If Miss Elginbrod had just twenty louis in the world, would she back the small, wiry horse with the slender legs, or the long, awkward-looking fellow with the swinging gait and the protruding chest?

Mary looked puzzled. She did not quite know; the small wiry horse probably. "Now it is my turn," she added with childish impatience. "Whom do you like best in the world?"

Bourrienne's eyes opened wide in amazement. Was the girl flirting with him? Evidently not; she did not look like a coquette, neither did she act like one.

She awaited his answer in mischievous silence. Once while attending the school near Clunes, the girls and boys of the district had held a "breaking-up" party. Truth had been played, she remembered, and as nearly all the little rustic maidens had been accompanied by their awkward but adoring lovers, the questions had been mostly upon the subject of love and courtship. Since then the game had been associated in Mary's mind with all sorts of sentimental fancies.

"That is rather an unfair question, is it not, Miss Elginbrod? If I answered it truthfully I should say I cared for no one."

"Oh, but then you would not be answering it truthfully; for we all have some one whom we love more than others."

A look of sadness came over Bourrienne's face. He thought of Julie. Yes, the girl was right; despite all Julie had done to him, he felt that she still held the first, the only place in his heart. Mary was regarding him intently. What a strange young man he was; always dreaming. He was absently watching the manœuvres of an uneasy fly which seemed to be buzzing its life away in the meshes of a

spider's web on a bush beyond, but she could see by the dreamy, calculating look in his eyes, that his thoughts were far away.

"You haven't answered my question, Mr. Bourrienne," she ventured.

"Well, since you insist upon an answer, I shall have to say with Romeo, 'In sadness, I do love a woman.'"

Mary laughed. "And with Benvolio, I might say, 'I aimed so near when I supposed you loved.'"

Bourrienne looked up in surprise. "What does a girl of your age" ("and station in life," he was going to say, but checked himself) "know about Shakespeare?"

"Oh, I read such works occasionally, because I want to be somebody, but I'll admit that I find little pleasure or interest in them. It's pure study for one like me. You can imagine what a mechanical process it is when I tell you that I started to read *Cymbeline* three times, and each time, just because I didn't mark the place, I couldn't find where I left off to save me. Now with the yellow-covered books that papa brings me from the village sometimes, it is quite the reverse. I can stop reading anywhere, and know just where to turn when I wish to take up the book again."

"You are decidedly candid. Not one girl

in a thousand would admit that. They like as a rule to be thought intelligent."

Well, she was willing that people should think what they liked about her. But they were forgetting the game. It was his turn again.

"Well, whom do you like best in the world?"

"Papa, of course," she replied demurely.

An involuntary smile played about Bourrienne's lips as he held his cards for her to draw. Mary did not match, so again the office of interrogator fell to his share. Which did she prefer, Turkish or Egyptian—he stopped abruptly, and after a moment's reflection decided upon another question. If she had three of a kind and a pair of aces, would she stay in?

She was not sure; probably not.

A cool breeze from the woods began to rustle through the leaves above them. Bourrienne raised his head and looked around. "It will be cooler later on, I think. By the way, Miss Elginbrod, what place is that away over toward the south, where the smoke is curling up from that tall chimney?"

"That's Ballarat. I thought you knew all those places."

"No, I came direct from Melbourne to Clunes."

"Ballarat is our great mining center. We settlers are very proud of our town. You should see it, Mr. Bourrienne. Such crowds and crowds of people throng the streets from morning until night; the funny little Japanese men with their dark-haired, almond-eyed wives; the neat little Chinese women that always look doubtfully at you; the splendid shops, and the immense monuments in the square! O, it is grand!"

He admitted that he was filled with curiosity to see the place, now that she had described it in such glowing terms. "How far is it from here?" he asked.

"Only about four miles. You could easily walk it."

"And could you walk it, too? I should scarcely profit by such a trip unless I had you for a guide. Are there no conveyances along this road?"

"None until six o'clock. We could go and be back by that time. I have often walked it before; besides, we could steal rides upon the ends of the lumber carts at intervals, or ask for a lift from any of the carters. They are all obliging around these parts."

He glanced at his watch. "It's just two now; do you want to go to-day?"

"Just as you say," she replied meekly,

while all the time her blue eyes sparkled at the thought of going to Ballarat with such a handsome escort as young Bourrienne.

"Come along, then," he replied unceremoniously.

Mary gathered up the cards and hurried into the house. She must fix herself very nice for such an unusual event. In place of the gingham collar of her gown with its lace frill, she substituted a piece of broad satin ribbon; her waist was embellished with a belt of the same; and then selecting a fresh muslin sunbonnet, and giving her curls a hasty brush, she returned to the yard. No doubt, in her girlish heart she expected to be greeted with a look of pleased surprise, or admiration, perhaps, at the fascinating changes she had wrought in her simple toilet; but had she donned a horse-collar or a life-preserver it would have been all the same to Bourrienne. He could have sworn that she had something blue on, that was all. Had she told her father she was going? he asked.

No, he was at work half a mile up the road, and would not be back until evening. And even if he should reach home before they did, he would not worry. She often went to Ballarat alone.

And so they set out along the quiet country road toward the mining town, Mary chattering

happily all the way, and Bourrienne replying now and then as the mood suited him. To most girls the long, dusty walk over the uneven, rocky road would have seemed all but an impossibility; but Mary, whose country breeding had inured her to all sorts of healthy outdoor exercise and small hardships, regarded it as a pleasure rather than otherwise.

They talked with the farm-hands on the way, searched for sassafras root along the roadside, or, having solicited a "lift" from a good-hearted carter, sat upon the end of the long lumber wagon, their feet dangling like those of a gamin on the rear end of a dray. And then, when they had alighted a quarter of a mile from the town, and had removed the dust from their shoes with handfuls of grass pulled from the wayside, with what a feeling of importance and superiority did Mary lead her companion on to the city. Up and down the busy streets they walked, gaping in at the shop windows, laughing at the peculiar calls of the fakirs, and causing more than one passerby to stare in puzzled surprise at the slender, golden-haired little maiden, with her neatly starched gingham gown and muslin sunbonnet, and at her handsome six-foot companion.

They visited the park, the museum, and the square, where Mary pointed out the

statue of the worthy Melbourne, and explained to Bourrienne, who had been repeatedly assuring her that he had never before beheld a place like Ballarat, excepting perhaps in his dreams, the good man's influence in the colony. Then they had lunch in a Chinese restaurant, where all sorts of curious knick-knacks and weapons from the East were displayed about the walls. Mary found it hard to relish the *chop sooy*, with its strong, undefinable odor, but she liked the delicious tea which shone clear as amber in the tiny, shallow, handleless cups, and the sweet-tasting bread-stuffs served upon gorgeously colored china plates thin as Venetian glass.

Bourrienne smiled as he looked across the table at his light-hearted, enthusiastic companion, who seemed to be deriving as much pleasure from those simple little enjoyments as another girl would derive from a ball or an opera, and wondered what poor Maret would think if he could see him there, drinking tea and discussing the question of wheat muffins with a little slip of a girl. Mary's sunbonnet had fallen back upon her shoulders, revealing a rather frowsy head of damp yellow curls; her skin, browned and flushed by the sun's rays, formed a pretty contrast to the snowy white of the muslin strings tied beneath her chin. Her dark eyes, bright with childish enthusiasm,

were wandering busily about the room, studying the quaint curios upon the tables and trying to discern the subjects of certain gaudy prints hanging upon the walls.

Following the direction of her glance, Bourrienne's eyes came to rest upon one of a Venetian scene above their table, a tiny, swan-like boat guided by a swarthy gondolier over a canal of greenish, unnatural-looking water, upon which the rays of a sickly moon cast a set, unvarying shadow. Reclining upon the cushions of the dainty craft was a dark-eyed Venetian maiden, her arms and throat ornamented with ropes of pearls and rubies, and her dark hair falling in a glistening wave about her shoulders. Something in the face and the pose of the figure reminded him of Julie, and for a moment all else was forgotten.

Mary, who admired the brunette type because of her own blonde locks, remarked upon the beauty of the southern girl.

"Do you think she is beautiful?" he asked without removing his eyes from the picture.

"Yes, it is a lovely face—such color, such life, and the eyes look so clear and true."

Bourrienne pushed his chair back with a jerk. "Have you finished?" he asked roughly. All the way along the narrow street until they reached the square, he did not deign to address her; then, seeming to become aware

of his lack of courtesy, he led her into a Japanese warehouse, and bade her select something to carry home as a souvenir of their little visit; but Mary was bashful, and could decide upon nothing. Bourrienne proposed all manner of articles, from hand-embroidered table-scarfs to valuable inlaid work-boxes; but Mary, horrified at the idea of so much money being expended upon her simple little self, stoutly refused to accept anything so costly. Finally they compromised upon a cheap Japanese umbrella of figured crepe paper, and a box of bonbons from a place next door; then they started for home, Mary declaring that she had never before had such a delightful time, unless it was at Jim Dawson's surprise party up at Red Sandy.

They managed to catch the "Cobb" coach back, and old John Elginbrod was just emerging over the rise of the road in the opposite direction as they reached the house.

"Egad, lad," he said, "if we don't strike gold in the western lot before another week, my name's not John Elginbrod. Give me a kiss, little one, and then hurry up and get the boy's supper."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EMU'S NEST.

ONE afternoon several weeks later, Bourrienne lay in the hammock upon the cool veranda of John Elginbrod's home, quietly smoking a cigar, and watching Mary Elginbrod as, with skillful fingers, she cut and stitched the rough shirts which her father wore while at work in the mine. Of late, Bourrienne had spent most of his time at the cottage, for the days were intensely hot, and in his far from robust condition he did not care to venture out beneath the fierce rays of the Australian sun; consequently, he and Mary spent many hours together, for the young girl felt sorry for his lonely condition and tried to lessen the monotony of the long hot days by talking to him of Australia and the mines, and endeavoring in her gentle way to make him manifest a little interest in the scenes around him.

John Elginbrod was seldom at home during the day, for the boring process had begun on the Western Tract, and as Bourrienne very much doubted his ability in the capacity of

manager-in-general, he left all overseeing in the old miner's hands. The latter had begun to look upon the young Frenchman as a son, so fond had he become of him in his open-hearted way. The young man's ready acquiescence in regard to the mining proposition had implanted a never-ending sense of gratitude in John Elginbrod's honest breast, and there was nothing in the old man's power that he would not do for Paul de Bourrienne. His home, humble though it was, was thrown open to him, and both Mary and he endeavored to make their guest's surroundings those of comfort if not luxury. No thought entered the old man's mind, that evil might come of his taking a man of young Bourrienne's appearance beneath the roof where his idolized daughter dwelt. He had never gotten over his habit of regarding Mary as a child, and so did not dream that any serious complication might result from their familiarity with the stranger. If Mary took pleasure in their guest's society, and succeeded in making the time pass more agreeably for him, John Elginbrod was pleased.

Many black looks, however, had been cast at Bourrienne from the direction of the mines, for although not one of the rough fellows dared dream of aspiring to the hand of John Elginbrod's daughter, still they felt in some manner responsible for the girl's welfare and

safety, and were ready to risk their lives if need be to protect her. Not that they disliked Bourrienne personally, for the old man's miners were far too peaceable and honest to be upon any but amicable terms with their neighbors; but being conscious of Mary's beauty and the unsophisticated nature of her father, they looked with disfavor upon the manner in which the stranger seemed to be ingratiating himself into the unworldly hearts of the Elginbrods. These city chaps were never known to have any good in them, anyhow, and would bear watching at the best of times. It would be just like one of their class to inveigle himself into the good graces of the father in order that he might become upon terms of intimacy with the pretty daughter.

Had Bourrienne known their thoughts in regard to himself, he would have been, to say the least, astounded, for seldom if ever did he think of Mary Elginbrod, and certainly not in the light in which Bill Soule and his hardy associates supposed. But one image filled his soul, and for a man of Bourrienne's disposition it was hard to forget. 'Twas true, he liked to have Mary with him as a companion, as some one to talk to when his thoughts waxed gloomy or his heart ached. He liked to lie beneath the shade of the giant gum-trees, while she sat nearby at her work, beguiling

the time with some legendary tale of the Australian forest or some simple jest of the miners; he liked to wander through the sweetly scented woods with her by his side, and gather for her the fragrant blossoms of the acacia trees, or the gorgeous foliage of the beef wood, so far above her own reach; he liked to fight a pathway for her through the thick scrub or "mallee," as the stubby growth upon the south of the settlement was called, and help to hunt for the nests of the strange birds with which the forest abounded. All these rambles he enjoyed in his half-hearted way, but no thought of love for the companion of his idle hours entered his mind. Even had he never known Julie Carbonnet, this little Australian girl could never have excited any deeper sentiment than friendship in his breast.

> "A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

He was watching her in a sad, dreamy way as he lay in the hammock, trying to imagine that it was Julie who sat there, and thinking with a heavy heart how happy they might have been in a scene like this had she but remained faithful. Mary had been relating to him tales of the horrors of convict life in Van Diemen's Land, as she had heard them from

the lips of her father; for John Elginbrod had lived in Tasmania until the gold rush in the early fifties had caused him to gather up his humble possessions and navigate to the mainland. A look of interest in her listener's eyes led her on to relate the romantic legend of the fertile isle, and as Bourrienne listened to the tales of young Tasman's gallantry for Van Diemen's daughter, he was thinking how much more he would have done for Julie and in what grander ways he would have shown his love and devotion, had she but proven worthy.

Having finished her work, Mary looked up and inquired in her quiet way: "What makes you so sad of late, Mr Bourrienne? You seem to have become tired of our Australian life. It is three days now since you have been near the mine."

"So you think I appear dejected, Mary? It must be imagination on your part; or if I really do display a lack of interest in my surroundings, you must attribute it to indolence, nothing more. These hot days, you know, are apt to deprive a fellow of animation."

"That is because you will not exert yourself. You would not mind the weather half so much, did you not sit and brood over it, instead of employing your mind in some profitable way."

Bourrienne laughed. "What would your highness have me do? Walk to the next

settlement and insist upon helping Lee Fung and his chattering countrymen to serve up the miscellaneous repast with which they regale the miners, or infringe upon the rights of the power-jumper by taking its work upon myself? Whatever you require, I am at your service."

"Exertion does not necessarily mean manual labor. You might find profitable diversion in many other ways. Don't you ever care to read? I can't recall having seen you looking over a newspaper since you came here. Father could get you the French papers from Melbourne, any time by the coach, if you would care to have them."

"No!" The emphasis and tone caused Mary to glance quickly up. A heavy frown had settled upon her companion's face, and his eyes were gazing far away into gloomy vacancy. "Pardon me," he said, after a few moments' silence. "I spoke abruptly. No, I do not care to read, although I thank you for your kindness."

Mary had arisen and folded her work; and as she entered the house, she remarked: "I cannot afford to be lazy, even if it is warm. After I have gotten father's lunch ready, in case he should return during the afternoon, I am going to walk through Dawson's woods to the sand trail where we found the emu's nest last Saturday. The eggs will be hatched out by

this time, and I want to see the young. Tim Rivers says that the young emu is the strangest bird in existence. Have you ever seen one?"

"Not that I remember."

"Well, if you do not care to venture into the woods, I shall have to leave you for a while. There is just time to go and return before supper."

"You are perfectly aware that I had far rather brave the sun's ferocity than dispense with your society."

The color mounted to Mary's face at the words, and Bourrienne could hear her singing as she moved about in the kitchen. Such light, shallow phrases came naturally to his lips, for he had associated for years with people who dealt in mere conventionalities, and he did not hesitate to speak thus to the little Australian girl, never dreaming that she, to whom the gallant words and actions of social life were novelties, might regard them in other than the light frame in which they were uttered.

In a few minutes Mary came from the house, swinging her sun-bonnet in her hand, and having tossed a linen sombrero into the hammock, started off toward the woods. Bourrienne discarded his cigar and leisurely followed.

"You Australians are delightfully energetic, I must say," he observed upon coming up

with her at the edge of the forest. "One would think you were carrying despatches through the enemy's lines, rather than searching for an emu's nest."

"It will be much cooler in the woods, that's why I hurry. What a shame!" she added, glancing around at the undergrowth, "everything is being ruined by the drought. That is one way in which your France surpasses our country; the rainfall is regular."

"And is it not here? I am sure I never thought while in France whether we had any rainfall at all, and as for this country—well, to tell the truth, I didn't know anything about it."

"Knew nothing about Australia! That is strange. Had you never heard of Sandhurst, and Geelong and Warrnambool?"

"Well, no; what knowledge I had of those places would not authorize me to claim an acquaintanceship with them. However, I believe our Paris papers devote a column or two each week to their social notes."

"Now you are jesting; but really, it seems strange to me that the foreigners who come to this country know so little about us. Last year two ladies and an old gentleman from Paris were travelling through this part of the colony with a guide, and father invited them to spend a day in the settlement as our guests.

They were very wealthy people, and spoke fairly good English, but they were so uninformed. The old gentleman wanted to know if we killed many deer in our forests, and as for the girls, they didn't even know where Gambiertown was. And besides their lack of knowledge, they were to my mind quite ill-bred, although I hesitate to speak ill of your countrywomen; for when I asked them if Paris was not a grand and exciting place, the younger one answered, 'You might consider it so, but Annette and I find it too awfully dull for anything.' Then she turned to her father and said something in French, and they all three laughed and looked at me; and later I heard her whisper, 'Do, papa, come and join us, we are having such fun.'"

"They referred, of course, to the change from Paris, for I must confess that since coming here, I fully coincide with Miss Annette and her sister in their views in regard to that restless metropolis. God made the country, and man made the town, you know."

"Well, we'll let it go at that; I didn't care anyway," with a proud little elevation of the head. "But to return to the subject, why do they not read more about other countries? Now I know all about Paris, and I have never been farther from home than Ballarat."

"All about it! well there is your Australian

energy again. Look out for the mallee there or you'll tear your dress."

Mary folded her muslin skirts carefully about her and made her way daintily along, skilfully avoiding the briers of the underbrush, and emerging into the open forest without a scratch or tear, while her less experienced companion suffered all manner of bangs and bruises, causing him to utter a few expressions of rather derogatory import under his breath. A few moments' walking through the cool brush brought them to the sand trail, and after a diligent search they found the nest they sought, buried deep in the sand at the foot of a stunted pine tree. Mary sat down beside it and with delighted eyes watched the feeble little creatures, of which there were at least nine in the nest, struggling about in their close quarters as they impatiently awaited the return of the mother emu. So many hours of the girl's life had been spent out of doors, wandering through the shady confines of the forest, and studying the lives and habits of the various creatures with which it abounded, that she had become as practical a student of zoölology or ornithology as ever graced the class-rooms of a college.

The sun was low in the trees toward the west when her companion reminded her that John Elginbrod would be anxiously awaiting

their return, and perhaps fearing that some mishap had befallen them in the forest. Mary remembered that at a short distance down the trail, a narrow path led diagonally through the bush toward the settlement, thus cutting off at least half a mile of woods, and proposed that they should return by it. With a little difficulty they found the opening of the narrow way, marked by a half-dead gum-tree whose hollow trunk and withered boughs stood out in sad and vivid contrast to the sturdy pines and evergreens around it.

"Bill Soule will think you have eloped with me, Mary, and will be despatching messengers to Melbourne to have us waylaid." He was walking a little in advance, holding aside the most stubborn branches in order that she might pass, and so did not see the flush that arose to Mary's face at the words. Probably he would have failed to read its meaning had he done so.

As they advanced, the path became wider and less obstructed, and both were congratulating themselves upon a comparatively clear way, when an unexpected obstacle, ominous in its proportions, loomed up before them. A huge giant of the forest, long a monarch amidst the more lowly growth of its surroundings, had at length succumbed to age and the elements, and with its gnarled roots clawing at

the air with seeming vindictiveness, lay stretched across the narrow way.

"Jupiter! but here's a fix. You can't cross that, Mary."

"I can try—at least, I might try——"

"If I wasn't here, is that it? Well, we'll have to manage it some way, for it's too late to turn back now. Do you mind if I lift you?"

Before she could reply, he had taken her in his arms and, having placed her upon the huge trunk with the injunction not to move until he bade her do so, jumped to the other side. Mary held out her hands, and as he caught her in his arms, Bourrienne bent his head and kissed her. Why he did so he could not have told. Probably because in the world to which he belonged, such acts were of common occurrence. Many a time had he insisted upon kissing some pretty society girl beneath the shadow of the palms in the ballroom, when her chaperone had happened to be engaged in an account of the latest scandal. Such things were to be expected, and no one demurred; but had young Bourrienne foreseen the result of that thoughtless kiss, he would have hesitated before imprinting it upon the innocent lips of Mary Elginbrod. She did not rebuke him, but a beautiful crimson flooded her face and throat, and her long lashes drooped over

the blue eyes. Bourrienne smiled at her confusion, and taking her hand, led her on toward the settlement. All the way home, a look of radiant happiness illumined Mary Elginbrod's face, for in her heart remained the memory of that caress—a caress which Bourrienne had forgotten ere they reached the border of the forest.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE CROSS-ROADS.

WITH what strange and shocking sensations are we brought to a realization of the fact that, through our own carelessness and lack of consideration for others, we have become involved in a series of painful complications from which naught but the loss of honor can extricate us. With what feelings of regret do we stand face to face with the knowledge that, from the casual and conventional utterances dropped from our lips in hours of thoughtlessness and folly, the indiscriminating eye of innocence has conceived all manner of absurd and sentimental fancies. In vain with inward iterations of denial do we endeavor to exculpate ourselves from any intention of dishonor in the matter; in vain with angry and sorrowful thoughts do we bemoan that lack of discernment in others which has led them to construe our thoughtless words and actions into those provoked by deeper and holier sentiments. Bitterly do we cry out against the injustice of the whole proceeding, but to no end; the eyes of the world look upon our deeds in a light of

their own, and be that light erroneous or otherwise, if we court the world's favor, we must bow before its inevitable judgment by forgetting our own interests in the matter, and assuming a role of abnegation and martyrdom.

With bowed head and frowning brow, Bourrienne paced the veranda of the cottage, endeavoring with confused brain to deliberate upon some plan of honorable action. Like a flash of light before his amazed senses had come the knowledge that Mary Elginbrod loved him with all the purity and fervor of a young and beautiful soul. Though with an assumption of disbelief he endeavored to put behind him the evidence of his senses, the fact was still there, direful in its difficulties, and his conscience would not, despite the bidding of his heart, exonerate him from all blame in the matter.

A startled blush at the sound of his voice or footfall, a smile of radiant happiness at some shallow word or expression uttered in the spirit of gallantry common to his class—and he had discovered her secret. In vain did he endeavor to shut his eyes to the truth. There it was before him, imperative in its call for expiation, and Paul de Bourrienne was in a quandary. He was not conceited, but neither was he blind. Only the day before, he had thrown

Mary a cluster of blossoms as she lay in the hammock, and, happening to turn suddenly, saw her press them to her lips. Surely this was a most unfortunate state of affairs. Had he been capable of loving, no doubt he would have rejoiced at the thought of winning so innocent and lovely a girl, but all sentiment had died within him, and he had nothing to offer in return for so ardent a love. He had left France expatriated in heart and soul from his former home and its environs, and, coming to this peaceful Australian settlement with the firm determination to forswear all pleasures and their prodigalities, had resolved to spend his life in quiet and obscurity. But here was a termination of affairs of which Paul de Bourrienne never dreamed when he first beheld John Elginbrod's daughter, and even while spending whole days in her society. He realized now, but alas, too late, that he should have guarded against a false impression, and have taken into consideration the unworldly heart of Mary Elginbrod. His lack of conceit, however, had deprived him of all anxiety in that direction, and as a result of his few months' residence in Australia, he was confronted with the, to him, far from agreeable fact that a woman's heart was in his possession for good or evil.

His first thought was to leave the settle-

ment; indeed, he had almost decided upon going that very day. But as he looked the action full in the face, it appeared cowardly in his eyes, and though no other course seemed open to him, he shrank from any act savoring of dishonor or cowardice.

"Poor child," he murmured, "she is far too good to waste her life upon an idle passion; would that she had bestowed her love upon one worthy of her innocence and beauty, upon one who could reciprocate with a love as tender, but I—"

Pulling his hat over his eyes and thrusting his hands into his pockets, he left the veranda and walked hurriedly in the direction of the woods. For over an hour he wandered through the thick evergreen shades, trying to calm the turbulence of his mind by action, and endeavoring to drown with angry persistency the sorrowful thoughts of Julie—always of Julie and his loss—which surged through his brain. More than ever since he had discovered Mary Elginbrod's sentiments toward himself, had these agonizing thoughts disturbed his peace, and in the bitterness of his spirit he cried out against the injustice, the strange contrariety of fate. He had lavished the passion of his soul upon one woman, and that woman had discarded his love for another's, while this girl, this scarcely more than child in thoughts

and actions, had bestowed her love quite as unwisely. Why should such things be, he wondered.

Leaving the woods, he visited the mines, chatted with the miners, and laughed and joked with John Elginbrod, while all the time his mind was in a state of wretched indecision. Mary was reading in the hammock as he approached the house, but he passed on to his room without speaking; indeed, he was scarcely conscious that she was there. With bent head he wandered aimlessly about upon the upper floor, his mind racked by as puzzling a question as ever disturbed the brain of a Hamlet. The door and windows of Mary's little room across the hall stood wide open, and as the breeze, fragrant with the odor of the pine trees, stirred the dainty muslin curtains, it lifted some small ornament from the mantel, causing it to fall with a crash to the floor. As Bourrienne crossed the threshold to replace it, an object upon the dresser caught his eye. It was a little cluster of faded flowers laid carefully and lovingly by. He remembered them perfectly, for they belonged to a rare species, and upon their first walk through the woods together, he had penetrated a miniature jungle to procure them for her. "Poor little girl," he whispered.

Turning from the room, he walked slowly

down the stairs. That touching little token had determined him. Mary was still reading, and as Bourrienne stopped in the doorway and watched her sadly, he saw that there were traces of tears upon her face. Approaching the hammock, he took her hand gently and said in a rather strained voice, "Mary, I have something to say to you, will you walk with me as far as the cross-roads?"

A pallor overspread the girl's features, and her breath seemed to come with painful rapidity; Bourrienne felt the little hand tremble as he held it in his own. Just so had he felt when speaking to Julie Carbonnet, and by his own passion for another he realized the depth of this girl's love.

She arose without a word, and together they walked along the woody, uneven road toward the west. Neither spoke until they had reached a low rail fence at the foot of the clearing, where the road branched off at right angles; here Bourrienne stopped, and leaning his elbow upon the topmost rail, tried to look the situation calmly in the face. Perhaps a more difficult task had never been given to man, than the one which now lay before him. He was about to plead a cause in which he had no heart, no ambition, no hopes; and although he had resolved to carry the matter through to the end, no fitting words, no appro-

priate expressions, would come to his aid, and his courage began to waver. Had Julie instead of Mary Elginbrod stood before him, all would have been well, for then the words of his heart would have arisen in eloquence to his lips; or even had he been about to plead the cause of another, like the hardy pilgrim, language would not have failed him in so good a cause.

Mary stood before him with one pretty arm resting upon the rail, and her thick yellow curls shading her face, as with slightly drooping head she awaited his words.

"Mary," he said at length, "can you not anticipate the question I am about to ask you?" She did not reply, and he continued: "I would make but a poor Lorenzo, an ungallant Romeo, and yet my cause is scarcely inferior to theirs." He spoke with a strange hesitancy, and there was an uneasiness in his manner which he seemed striving to suppress.

"We will let eloquence go to the four winds of Heaven, Mary, for the gods are partial in their gifts and would not endow with favors one so unworthy as I. You have known me but a few short months, during which time I must have appeared in your eyes as an indolent, unambitious sort of fellow, with neither aim nor purpose in life; a veritable carpet knight, preferring uninterrupted ease and in-

dolence to the more laudable occupation of striving for a place of honorable recognition among men. You have no doubt looked upon me as an outcast, an alien from home and friends, and perhaps you have been led to pity the desolation of my state. Yes, I was desolate, despondent, cynical, until in the quiet and peaceful seclusion of your forest home, Mary, I have learned, to a certain extent, to forget the world and its heartlessness, that world which I left because of its hopeless emptiness, its shallow, vainglorious customs, its prodigalities, its deceits, its dishonor, its—its treacheries. Regard me not as an idle adventurer, Mary, and though the brevity of our acquaintance may render my suit one of folly and impertinence in your eyes, forget its seeming lack of propriety and answer me one little question—a question which means—but never mind that part. Unworthy as I am, Mary Elginbrod, of your beauty and goodness, will you overlook that unworthiness and become my wife?"

For a few moments an embarrassing silence reigned, broken only by the gentle wind which rustled through the pine trees, causing some little woodland creature to scamper away in fright as it loosened a withered cone or dying twig. Then Mary Elginbrod slowly raised her head, and as she looked into the grey eyes

before her, asked in a strangely low and tremulous voice, "Is it because you love me, Paul Bourrienne, that you wish to marry me?"

In Bourrienne's eyes the scene depicted was that of a great dramatic crisis, and would forever be indelibly stamped upon his memory. The sun had sunk below the horizon line in the west, leaving the little Australian clearing bathed in a mellow, crimson glow. No sounds could be heard save those of nature; from far away in the forest came the mournful howl of the dingo, and the weird laughing note of the giant king-fisher as it pounced unrelentingly upon its prey; the dry under-brush crackled beneath the scampering feet of the Australian rabbit; the mocking note of the lyre bird came through the clear summer air; and high above their heads the silvered branches of the tall gums and cedars swayed gently in the breeze. All bespoke nature and peace; and before him stood this girl, looking into his eyes with the unconscious pleading of love in her gaze, and awaiting a lover-like answer to the pathetic little query—an answer which he knew he was powerless to give, and give truthfully. But Bourrienne was human, and though his eyes dropped before those steadfast ones, he answered, "Yes, Mary, it is because I love you."

And yet, 'tis said the days of chivalry are past!

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

THREE weeks later, at the picturesque little rural church of Castlemain, a town some few miles distant, Bourrienne and Mary Elginbrod were made man and wife. The former had pleaded that the ceremony might take place as soon as possible, for as the days passed on their way, grave misgivings as to his ability to carry out his worthy intentions had entered his mind, and with that strange wish which we all possess during trying ordeals, to have the matter settled at once beyond our own power of choosing, he wished to insure the materialization of his solemn resolves by the insoluble vows of matrimony.

John Elginbrod had held up his worthy hands in speechless amazement when the question was propounded to him, and though his old heart was sorely moved at the thought of losing the child so dear to him, he found comfort in the knowledge that her happiness would be secured, and with tear-dimmed eyes fervently blessed them both. The miners were greatly pleased at the turn affairs had

taken, and wondered in their honest hearts how they could have been led to doubt the intentions of a man like Bourrienne. They followed to the little church, and stood with bowed heads while the simple yet ever awe-inspiring words were spoken, which made the stranger and their little Mary man and wife. In their eyes and in the eyes of old John Elginbrod, she seemed scarcely less than a being from another world, a creature to be adored and worshipped, as with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes she stood before them, dressed in a simple muslin gown, with white Australian palm-lilies wreathed in her yellow curls.

Bourrienne went through the ceremony like an automaton. Ever since the evening upon which he had resolved to sacrifice his own interests by making an innocent girl happy, he had lived in a strange state of unreality and incertitude. In a dreamy, mechanical way he uttered the responses of the marriage service, and sighed with relief when it was over; and then only did he begin to realize the enormity of the step he had taken. In endeavoring to surmount an exigency, he had underestimated the importance of the part he must necessarily play in the matter, and with pardonable misgivings began to wonder if he had acted wisely in deceiving Mary Elginbrod as to his sentiments toward her. Unsophisticated as she

was in the world's ways, would she not, despite his endeavors to conceal it, notice a lack of love upon his part, and would she not in time suspect the truth? Perplexing doubts filled his mind, but with the calm determination of a stoic, he vowed that no inattention on his part, no coldness or reserve, no unfulfilled duty, should cause her to regret the marriage vows which now seemed to consummate her happiness.

They were not to settle in the colony, that is, not for the time being. Mary must see a little of the world, now that she was his wife. That at least was due her. He could not take her to France, not yet, at any rate; his sorrow and bitterness were too deep to allow of a return to his former home and associates. Perhaps at some future date, when the keen edge of his grief had become worn and dulled by time, perhaps when to a certain extent he had learned to forget, he would return to Pierrepont and see her installed in the position which was now rightfully hers. She knew nothing of his people or home, nor had she asked to be enlightened. She loved him, that was enough.

Bourrienne secured a map of Australia, and together they looked it over. There were hundreds of places to decide upon. That was the trouble. Would she care to go to the

west and visit Perth or Freemantle? No, those places were quite too far away; couldn't they select some place nearer home? Ballarat for instance. Bourrienne demurred. Ballarat was noisy and had no attractions at that time of year. There were more attractive towns than that in the next colony. What did she say about going to Sydney? No indeed, she could not leave her father to go so far away from home. She had never but once been away from him for more than a day in all her life, and that was when the Dawson girls had insisted that she should spend the night at Red Sandy, and the following day had been too stormy to venture back. At last, after a great deal of parleying, they decided upon a place called Rockhampton; not the Rockhampton of Queensland, but a small sea-shore resort upon the outskirts of Melbourne, a well-known retreat for pleasure seekers and for tourists from England and the colonies, and so overrun during certain seasons of the year by these seekers of gaiety and frivolity, that it is no longer a quiet sea-shore town, but a bustling hive of restless humanity.

And so in the busy little port of Rockhampton, in the midst of gaiety and pleasure, their honeymoon was spent. There Mary saw that world of which she had often in a vague way dreamed—the world of fashion and confusion.

There for the first time she beheld what people call life, and being happy and care-free, she enjoyed the exciting and novel amusements which the place afforded. She loved to drive along the shores of the bay with Paul by her side; to sit with him upon the cool veranda of their fashionable hotel, and watch the dull green waves as they came tumbling up the beach, causing the happy little revellers to scamper away to their mammas until their fury had abated. She liked the ceaseless bustle in the splendid house, the soft carpets and polished stairways, the grand ball-room and dining halls, the liveried servants, and above all, the handsome, well-dressed people who passed to and fro. Never before had Mary seen anything like it, and she smiled to herself as she thought how her father or Bill Soule would open their eyes in wonder at such grandeur and magnificence.

It is true her pleasure was not unalloyed, for at times in the midst of her strange surroundings she felt shy and awkward, and wondered if Paul would consider her ill-bred or uncultured if she unwittingly committed any little breach of social etiquette. He was so thoughtful and kind that he would no doubt laugh at her scruples over such mere trivialities; still she wished that she was more like the girls whom she met each day upon the promenade

or saw whirling about in the ball-room of the hotel in the evening. She was not accomplished; she could not dance or sing or play, as they did, and at times she feared that he who had been bred among cultured men and women would find her dull and uninteresting. Every rose has its thorn, every ounce of joy its grain of sorrow, and so in the midst of a honeymoon of bliss, certain little imps of trouble entered Mary's mind, which, though they did not materially mar her happiness, caused her no little annoyance for the time being.

Even upon the evening of the day of their arrival, a little incident happened which caused her to feel discontent and regret. They were crossing the hall from the dining-room, and as the strains of a dreamy fantasia reached their ears, Paul took her hand to lead her to the ball-room, remarking that he had not waltzed for a long time, and Mary, with flushed cheeks, was obliged to admit that she knew nothing whatever about that fascinating amusement. Young Bourrienne smoothed the matter over, by saying that he was just as well pleased for his part, as he was not over-fond of dancing, but that the music sounded so inviting he thought she might wish to join the dancers.

Then again, a week later, Mary, while in her room one day, was greatly annoyed and dis-

tressed by overhearing fragments of a conversation between two women, who with the inconsideration born of thoughtlessness, seated themselves upon the broad veranda just outside her window and began a series of spirited criticisms in which the names of the greater part of the guests were involved.

"Several new people have arrived since last week, I notice," remarked one, whom by her voice Mary recognized as the mother of two very stylish-looking girls whom she had met quite frequently in the halls and dining-room.

"Yes, this is always the most popular month. Only yesterday I remarked to my husband that there were more London people here this season than ever before," replied her companion.

"Yes, England is well represented at Rockhampton each year of late, and for my part I am heartily glad. I do so hate these chattering Australians," rejoined the other. "By the way, have you met that Mr. Bourrienne and his wife?"

"You mean the very young couple who arrived the first of the week? No, I have not been formally introduced, but I exchanged a few words with them at breakfast the other morning, when we happened to sit at the same table."

"He is a handsome boy, and so young to

be burdened with a wife. He can't be over twenty-two or three, I should say. My girls are fairly smitten with him, and are awfully provoked because he doesn't dance. Indeed, Louisa was making eyes at him all through dinner yesterday, in spite of my remonstrances. Dear girls! they are so full of life and merriment that the place seems dull to them, and they are ever on the lookout for new amusements. By the way, what do you think of his wife?"

"Rather a pretty little thing, but you can see that she isn't anybody. She dresses well, but it is quite apparent that his taste predominates."

"Yes, there is money and good breeding on one side at least. Dear, dear, these young scapegraces of boys leave home and make such unpardonable matches that, to my mind, they ought all to be kept under lock and key until they reach the age of discretion. Come, let us walk down to the corner, I am longing for a cooling drink."

A rustle of silken petticoats and a whiff of violet perfume, and the two breeders of discontent swept by the window, and Mary, with a flushed face and tears in her eyes, sat down to brood over what she had heard. "It serves me right for being mean enough to listen," she thought, "but I could not help overhear-

ing what they said unless I had left the room. I wonder if Paul thinks I am awkward and a nobody, and all the other things they called me. I shall not tell him, for it would make him angry, I know. He thinks a thousand times more of me than he does of all these people taken together. Good breeding, indeed! I wonder in what it consists in the eyes of these people. Paul is of course cultured and refined, and I have tried so hard to imitate him, and thought I was getting along so nicely in this lovely place, and now those old women have spoilt it all. I wonder what Bill Soule would say if he heard them."

This soliloquy was cut suddenly short by the entrance of Bourrienne, who, having cast his cap aside, placed in her hands a rather inky-looking letter and a large box of English violets. "The letter is from your father, Mary, I presume; the violets I sent for to Melbourne last night, knowing that you were fond of them. They will be a novelty here, for they are out of season."

Mary opened her lips to speak, but somehow the words would not come; and laying the flowers upon a chair beside her, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Why, what's the matter, Mary? Don't you like them?"

"Oh, yes, Paul, they are lovely, and it was

so kind and thoughtful of you to get them for me; but I have not felt like myself for the last few days, and so am a little out of sorts. I think perhaps I'm homesick or—or something."

Bourrienne thrust his hands into his pockets and, walking to the window, looked out upon the blue waters of the channel stretching calm and peaceful on every side. It would have been hard to fathom his thoughts as he stood there in silence, with a strange, longing expression in his grey eyes. Far away across that blue expanse were France and Julie; France, the home of his childhood and boyhood, his country, the land of his birth, and in that land the girl whom he had loved and lost, whom he still loved with all the fervor and passion of his soul. Long he stood there looking gloomily into vacancy, and there was a hard expression upon his features and his eyes were dull when he at length turned from the window and approached the chair where Mary, his wife, was sitting.

"Poor little girl," he said, bending over her, "you are homesick, and I know how you must feel, for I—I used to be homesick at school sometimes, long ago. If you say so, we will go back to the quiet little home in Australia, back to the good old man, your father, and live at peace with God and the world."

"Mary," he continued as she pressed his hand and smiled through her tears, "if ever I seem sad or gloomy or thoughtless in any way, you must not mind it, little one. The happiest lives have their taste of sorrow and misfortune at times, and I have had mine. It is all over now, however, and can never materially affect you or me; but in the midst of—of blessings such as we now enjoy, we are apt to look back at times to some sorrow in the past, some wound not quite healed. Before I met you, Mary, as I told you, my life was not quite what it should have been. I was careless, prodigal and undutiful, and I have many things to regret, and if I seem taciturn or sad, you must forgive me, little one, and say, 'He is a man of moods, God help him.' Come, let us join the revellers. A new quartette has arrived from Melbourne."

CHAPTER XIX.

"SANCHO PANZA I AM."

"HE'S as good a hoss as dah is in dese parts, sah, and as fo' 'telligence, why dat dah hoss knows as much as a man. Any ob de boys down at de hotel can tell yo how he outdid ole Missa Holcombe's Jumbo at last yar's meet. Dah's great stuff in dat critter—jes look at his legs, sah! I usually most always gibs dis hoss to Missa Paget, but he say to me dis morning, 'Sabe out de best roader yo'se got in de stable, Jim, case I'se gwine to Melbourne dis afternoon.' So I'll gib him Hector dar; he takes longer strides and gets ober de ground quicker, but he not hab de easy, eben gait ob dis boy."

"He is a sleek-looking chap," replied Bourrienne, to whom this wordy address was directed. "Saddle him up, Jim, and I'll take a spin. It's a long time since I had a good horse under me."

The negro immediately set to work equipping the nimble little creature, talking incessantly the while, and when his voluble task was at length completed, Bourrienne placed a

piece of silver in his hand and, vaulting into the saddle, cantered down the sloping stable drive to the smooth, white road below, and then on toward the west. The day was clear and cool, and a salt breeze coming from the water equalized the summer temperature and caused the air to feel fresh and invigorating. Scarcely had he covered half a mile when his usually drooping spirits began to revive, and a keen enjoyment of his recreation and of the woodland scenery around him possessed his soul, and for the time being he forgot that there were such things as sorrow and disappointment in the world, and talked cheerfully, even merrily, to his four-footed companion. Kyrat, as if aware that his style of gait and well-groomed appearance were being commended, did credit to his illustrious namesake by arching his glossy neck still more proudly and lifting his white fore-feet still more gracefully as they cantered along the quiet road.

Bourrienne had asked Mary to accompany him upon a drive along the water, thinking that the cool air would do her good, for both had been strangely down-hearted of late, and time seemed to lag unmercifully upon their hands; but she, having been taken with a violent headache shortly after lunch, as a result of her first glass of champagne, preferred to lie down in the cool and quiet of her room

until its effects had worn off, and so Bourrienne had decided to ride instead, and had started out alone.

It was their last day at Rockhampton, for by mutual agreement they had decided to return to the settlement and live quietly and peacefully in the little vine-clad cottage which for so many years had been Mary's home. Even had Bourrienne cared to travel and mingle with society, the girl's love for her father would have made her reluctant to leave that humble shelter. There she was born, and there she had lived happily from infancy, and above all, there she had met Paul de Bourrienne —that alone would have been sufficient to endear the place to her. Humble though it was, the fact that it held the two beings she loved best upon earth rendered it, in Mary's eyes, an abode of beauty and wealth; and she preferred its simplicity to the noise and bustle of Rockhampton. The people whom she had met in the latter place seemed cold and reserved, and so unlike the kind-hearted settlers she had known from childhood. In her simple little heart she feared she should never become accustomed to the strange habits of society, but had it been Paul's pleasure to live amidst its restless and unceasing whirl, she would have tried to be contented for his sake. But Bourrienne evinced no such desire; on the

contrary, he voiced the very thoughts that were in Mary's mind by professing a weariness of Rockhampton and its amusements, and suggesting that they return home.

With ill-concealed joy she looked forward to the time when she should once more be folded to her father's honest heart, and, sitting before the log fire with her work upon the little table nearby, should tell him of the city she had seen, its people, and the way they talked and dressed; while he, with his feet crossed upon the hearth and a good-natured smile upon his broad, comely face, would sit opposite listening intently, and taking the old clay pipe from between his lips at intervals to murmur, "Ye don't say so, Mary!" or, "Now g'long, girl, y're joking." How glad he would be to see her, and it would be all so nice and home-like. Paul would be there all the time, and perhaps Tim Rivers or the other miners would drop in occasionally of an evening, and spin yarns for the amusement of all. Oh, it would be so much better than gadding about with nothing to do but dress up and look pretty, and having to act just so to escape unpleasant criticisms.

Mary did not express her thoughts in so many words to Bourrienne, but perhaps in a vague way he read what was passing in the girl's mind, and he seemed as anxious as she

to hasten their departure. Of late he was always ill at ease when alone in her presence. Some change seemed to have taken place in the girl, a change which he could scarcely define; but he felt that at the settlement all would be different. She would be at home there and among friends, and he need not be troubled by that everlasting fear that he was neglecting her. This was what was passing through his mind as he rode slowly along through the picturesque country, breathing in the sweet scent of the woods and wild-flowers, and now and again raising his whip to scatter the white petals of the wild apple-blossoms over the green grass near the palings, or to gently assist some loitering fowl and her fluttering brood out of his way.

He had reached a point where the road forked, and was pausing in order to decide which branch to follow, when a suspicious twitching about Kyrat's ears caused him to draw up the reins and listen. The cause of the animal's uneasiness soon became apparent, for after a few minutes the sound of a horse's hoofs could easily be detected far away in the direction whence they had come. Thinking that some acquaintance from the hotel might have chosen that route for a pleasure ride, and not feeling in a companionable mood, Bourrienne dug his heels into

Kyrat's flanks and darted into the shadier road. For a few rods the ground was damp and soft, rendering the sound of his horse's hoofs indistinct, and the surrounding growth of trees and brush, impenetrable to the eye, obscured him from view; but only for a short time did these agreeable conditions prevail. To his surprise and chagrin, after a few minutes' brisk gallop, he emerged upon an open space where the road, unshielded by tree or bush, stretched level and white along the cliffs of the bay, for over a mile and a half of open country. It was too late to turn back and take the inland road, for the sound of rapidly approaching hoofs could be plainly heard in the distance, and before he could have turned and regained the cross-roads, the horseman, whoever he was, would be already there; so urging his own horse forward he continued along the open road toward the shore.

He had covered about half a mile, and had reached a slight bend where the road followed the curve of the water, when pausing to glance back, he discovered that the rider had reached the edge of the open, and seemed to be scanning the country in every direction. At length, as if satisfied as to the location of the object he sought, he urged his horse into a gallop and darted out in pursuit.

"Followed, eh?" thought Bourrienne. "Well, we'll have some fun out of it, anyway. Now show us what you can do, old boy," and setting his feet firmly in the stirrups, he loosened the bridle and gave the wiry little mustang full swing. In Kyrat's estimation a headlong tear over the open plain in the cool, calm, refreshing air of an April day was not a pastime to be despised, and with head well out, and his small white feet close together, he dashed nimbly forward.

For over a mile of hard white road the chase was continued, and then young Bourrienne, with a peculiar smile about his mouth, turned to meet his pursuer. He was about to give utterance to some light, jesting remark about banditti, etc., when suddenly the words died upon his lips and a dull red flush mounted to his forehead. The horseman, who was a fashionably dressed little fellow, with curly dark hair and very white teeth, rode his horse alongside and, grasping him by both hands, threw back his head and gave vent to a peal of hearty laughter. "Well, Bourrienne, you gave me a good chase for it, but I was bound that I'd shake your hand before you left. Now account for yourself, old man."

"You, Paget?" Bourrienne managed to articulate in a rather strained voice. "Where did you drop from?"

"I have been here for over a week, but somehow or other we happened to miss each other. It was only yesterday that I came across your name upon the register, and since then I have been on the lookout for you. This afternoon when I got my horse up at the hotel stable, old Jim, who seemed to know you, made some remark about the other Frenchman having taken Kyrat. I questioned him and found that you had started but a few moments in advance, followed you, and here I am. Jove, but that was a beastly chase you gave me."

"Had I but known it was you, Paget, whom I was trying to evade, you may be sure I should have been less hasty in my flight. I—I am glad to see you."

"Come, turn your horse's head the other way and ride with me. I have lots to say to you, Bourrienne. When a fellow deserts home, friends and country for unknown parts, without a moment's notice, it is perfectly natural that he should be ordered to render an account of himself, eh?"

The momentary flush which had suffused Bourrienne's face at the unexpected appearance of young Paget, had given place to a rather noticeable pallor, and the smile with which he endeavored to meet the light chaff of the other was strained and unnatural. Although he

would have much preferred that the interview should cease where it had begun, there was nothing to do but acquiesce, and so they rode slowly on toward Melbourne. A tumult of contending emotions was at work in Bourrienne's brain. Beside him rode the man whom he should hate above all others, the man who had won what he had lost, the husband of Julie Carbonnet. Perhaps, had it not been for him, Julie would have remained faithful. Fate was playing its ironical jests upon him in thus taunting him with his loss.

"I see by the register, Bourrienne, that you have married since leaving Paris," remarked Paget after a few moments' silence.

"Yes," was the uncommunicative reply.

"I also have married," continued the little fellow proudly. "Father said I was not to take a wife until I could support one by my own endeavors, but I took the girl and cut, and then after a reasonable length of time the old gentleman tumbled to himself, and everything was straightened out. You must meet my wife, Bourrienne, before we leave."

Some suddenly discovered trouble in Kyrat's off leg seemed to require all Bourrienne's attention for the moment, and his companion continued: "There's nothing like marriage after all, Paul. When a man has a beautiful young wife for a companion, he has something

to live for and takes twice the interest in life that he does while single."

Bourrienne ventured no reply, and the loquacious Paget, feeling intuitively that the subject, for some reason or other, was not an agreeable one, quietly changed it for one which he hoped would be more productive of conversation. "You must have been flitting about a great deal lately. I saw your name registered in both London and Versailles a few months ago, but unfortunately was too late by a few hours to meet you at either place."

"London and Versailles! You must be mistaken, Paget. Since leaving France over two years ago, I have been in but one place, Australia."

"Australia! ye gods! What have you been doing here, exploring the bush? But say, that's strange, if you really haven't been in England; for as true as there is a nose on your face, I saw your name registered at the Métropole, London, and upon inquiring, they told me that you had left a few hours previously."

"Perhaps you had been out with the boys the night before. I haven't a double to my knowledge, and 'Sancho Panza I am, unless I was changed in the cradle.'"

"Well, unless my memory is playing me some strange tricks, what I am telling you is gospel."

They had now drawn up at the office of a yacht builder in the city, where young Paget, who was endeavoring to make Paget pere's money disappear in the very quickest way, alighted to transact the business upon which he had come; and the subject was abandoned. Nor was it again resumed as they rode home through the pleasant spring twilight. Bourrienne seemed disinclined to speak upon any subject concerning himself, and the conversation, through his endeavors, gradually drifted to current political topics, and upon them remained until they drew up at the hotel stable.

Several daintily arrayed forms were flitting about upon the broad veranda as they approached the house, some dancing to the strains of a merry-go-round upon the beach, others sitting upon the railing munching bonbons and popcorn balls. All alone in a remote corner, Bourienne discovered Mary with a book in her lap, upon which her attention was not however riveted, for with a sad, longing look in her blue eyes, she was watching the lively girls around her.

Again the strange irony and contrariety of his position rushed upon him as he led Alexandre Paget forward to present him to his wife. An unmistakable look of admiration lighted up that little gentleman's features as

for a few moments his eyes rested with a marked scrutiny upon Mary Bourrienne's face, and the congratulatory words he uttered afterwards to Paul were genuine and heartfelt.

"I should like very much to have my wife meet you, Madame de Bourrienne, and if you will be kind enough to wait a few moments, I will go in search of her."

Mary smilingly acquiesced, and with a low bow Paget left them. Bourrienne felt a deathly sickness assail him, and his heart began to beat quickly against his breast. Could he meet her calmly, or would his agitation betray him? The blood seemed to stagnate in his veins, and he could feel his face grow cold and white. Mary was talking to him, but he did not heed her. She was saying, "I am so glad you have met one of your old friends, Paul, it must recall pleasant memories. He is quite a handsome young man, I think, and so chivalrous. Why, Paul, what's the matter, are you ill? Your face is almost ghastly!"

"Am I pale, Mary? It must be the fatigue from the long ride. I don't think I have quite recovered from the shaking up I got in that smash-up so long ago; every little exertion tires me these days," he replied, dipping his handkerchief in a fountain nearby and holding it to his forehead.

The screen door of the hotel opened and closed, and the sound of voices and approaching footsteps reached their ears.

"Monsieur and Madame de Bourrienne, my wife."

Slowly Paul de Bourrienne raised his eyes, expecting to behold the face of Julie Carbonnet, only to meet the laughing eyes and dazzling smile of a pretty American girl. Not till afterwards did Alexandre Paget understand the meaning of that fervent handshake.

Several hours later, as the two men strolled along the beach smoking in the cool evening air, Bourrienne turned to his companion and said in a low, uncertain voice, "It's strange, Paget, but I have been laboring under a mistake; I understood that you were married to Julie Carbonnet of Paris."

There was a rather puzzled expression in Paget's eyes as he turned and looked scrutinizingly at his companion. After a few moments' pause, he observed: "I had intended to keep silent upon that subject, Paul, but since you have referred to it, there can be no harm in my speaking my mind. Do you really think you acted quite squarely in that direction? I don't intend to be impertinent or meddling, but, by George, Bourrienne, she was too fine a girl to treat shabbily."

Bourrienne stopped short, and facing the

other, asked in a strange voice, "What do you mean, Paget?"

"Oh, nothing, but you know how people will gossip. It was reported that you jilted her."

"But was she not engaged to you?"

"No, she would not have me; I admit I was pretty sorely smitten in that direction at one time," and little Paget blushed as he recalled a certain humiliating predicament.

"But the announcement in the papers?"

"That was all a mistake, it was corrected later, you know. You don't mean to say, Bourrienne, that——" He stopped, and neither spoke for a long time; then Bourrienne asked in a low voice, "And Julie, she is still unmarried?"

"Yes, it is rumored that she has resolved to remain single all her life."

For an instant the two men looked into each other's eyes—only for an instant; then Bourrienne turned away. Alexandre Paget stooped and picking up a stone from the beach, skimmed it over the moonlit water. Both watched its course as if upon that tiny pebble some great question was pending. "Funny, I used to be able to do that with the best, when I was a youngster," Paget remarked.

A few more trivialities followed, as if each were seeing who could outdo the other in giv-

ing utterance to things farthest from his mind; then they retraced their steps in silence toward the house.

"We leave for Ballarat at seven in the morning, so I'll bid you good-by now," Bourrienne said, extending his hand.

Paget grasped it in his own, and again their eyes met. No words were uttered, but each understood the other's glance. Paget's said, "Be a man, Paul—she is young and beautiful, don't break her heart;" and young Bourrienne's soul replied through the dark grey eyes, "She shall never know, so help me God!"

CHAPTER XX.

"HONOR IS THE SUBJECT OF MY STORY."

"FATHER, do you believe in the significance of dreams?"

John Elginbrod glanced over his coffee-cup at his pretty daughter, and took a long draught of the fragrant beverage before replying. They were having breakfast alone together, Paul not having returned from the city, to which place he had ridden the day before to transact some mining business.

"Well really, girl, I can't say as I do. Your mother, though, was a firm believer in dreams, and stuck to it that they foretold coming events. Many a time have I heard her say that the night before the bushrangers attacked our little place back in Tasmania, she saw the whole thing in her dreams."

"I am not superstitious, father, but last night at about midnight, I awoke from such a horrible nightmare that, do as I would, I could not go to sleep again, so I came down here and read by the fire until nearly morning. It was so vivid and terrifying that in some strange way I have been haunted by it ever since.

"I thought I was standing in some busy place, such a place as I have always supposed Paris to be, all bustle, noise and confusion. So bewildered was I in my strange surroundings, that I did not know which way to turn, but cowered, dazed and frightened, in a narrow doorway, eagerly scanning the faces of the passers-by, hoping in a vague sort of way that I might see one familiar to me. As I looked I thought the crowd in the street grew denser and seemed to be moved by some great excitement. Hoarse cries and shouts reached my ears, causing me to draw back in terror from the noisy mob. Then, suddenly, as if moved by some invisible force, the writhing mass drew back as one person to make room for some approaching object. Despite my fear I was filled with curiosity, and pressed forward to see what had caused the strange excitement. Four men appeared carrying a litter, and upon it lay a form all covered with blood. It was Paul! With a cry of agony I was about to throw myself upon him, when suddenly his eyes opened, and looking at me with, oh, such a weary, sad expression, he said to the crowd about me, 'Hold her back, she must not touch me for I am bathed in blood.' I tried to break away from my captors, but my senses seemed to desert me, and I sank to the ground. With a falling sensation I awoke. My heart

was beating wildly, and a cold perspiration stood out upon my forehead. So real did it all seem that for a few moments I lay in absolute fear and trembling. Then I arose and came down here."

"A bad nightmare, indeed, girl. Ye must have eaten too hearty a supper. Now if your mother was here, Mary, she would be preparing widow's weeds for ye," and the old man laughed, but in rather a forced manner.

Mary smiled, but there was a worried expression upon her face, as she glanced toward the clock, and then turned her blue eyes toward the window and scanned the sandy road leading in the direction of Melbourne. They had been home now nearly a month, and were gradually drifting back into their old simple yet pleasant way of living, and Mary was her happy self again. There was nobody to say unpleasant or annoying things about her, nobody in whose society she felt strange and out of place, and she had ceased to worry because she was not accomplished and brilliant like other girls.

"Did not Paul say he would be back by nine this morning, father?"

"I believe he said something of the kind, but then ye couldn't expect the boy to be able to tell to a dot. Now don't ye let any crazy dreams or wild fancies run away with

that little head of yours, Mary, or I shall think my little girl has turned into a sentimental woman."

Mary did not reply, for she had arisen from the table with a smile of happiness upon her face, having caught sight of a horseman in the distance, and had gone to the door to await him.

"There he is, girl," called her father as the sound of the hoofs reached his ear; "now perhaps ye'll cease your mooning and be sensible. My Mary used to wait for me in the same way," he mused, smiling sadly, as he donned his old straw hat and departed through the kitchen door for the mines.

Bourrienne rode up and, lifting his hat courteously to Mary, dismounted and followed her into the house. He did not embrace her, nor did Mary expect it, so seldom indeed did he caress her. "Back again, Paul," she whispered softly, as she slipped her hand gently into his.

"Yes, and hungry as a wolf; I rode all night and have not breakfasted yet."

She poured his coffee, and then sat down by the hearth, her hands clasped about her knees. Bourrienne ate in silence, and then pushing his chair from the table, arose and lighted a cigarette.

"Where's your father, Mary?"

"Gone to the mines, I suppose; he finished breakfast just before you came."

A silence followed, during which Bourrienne paced the room aimlessly, pausing now and then to lift some small object from the mantel or table, and examine it closely as if studying its mechanism. "Did it rain here last night?" he asked at length, having taken up his position at the window with his back to the fireplace.

Mary arose and, going to him, placed her hand upon his shoulder. Then she looked up into his face and asked, "What is it, Paul?"

"What is what, Mary?"

"What is it that you wish to tell me?"

"Did I say that I had anything to tell you, Mary?"

"No, but you have."

"Well yes, then, since you have guessed my thoughts, I'll confess, I have something to say to you, Mary, something of which I intended to speak before leaving home yesterday, but for various reasons neglected to do so."

"Anything that concerns you or me directly, Paul?"

"Yes, directly; but you have a level head upon your shoulders, little one, and will look at the matter in a sensible light, I know."

"What is it, Paul, tell me?"

"Mary, to-morrow I sail for France."

Ah, condemn him not! Who can tell with what bitter struggles Paul de Bourrienne fought against the temptation that was alluring him on to destruction? Who can tell with what agonized thoughts his soul was torn and tortured as he rode through the lonely night, striving to thrust the demons of hell behind him, and outrace them in the headlong rush for honor, only to find their grinning, impish faces close upon him when with returning hope he imagined he had conquered? Who can tell with what agony he at one moment lifted his eyes to the starlit heavens and prayed God to give him strength to resist, only at the next to rain bitter curses upon his unhappy lot? Paul de Bourrienne had struggled and had lost; but even as he felt his resisting strength give way, and knew that he was powerless to cope with temptation, he tried to cheat himself with the vain belief that he was doing no wrong in leaving the young wife to whom he had been married but a few short months. Julie Carbonnet, as the wife of another and as the woman who had proven herself unworthy of any man's love by breaking the solemn promise of fidelity, and Julie Carbonnet, single, and to all appearances returning his love, were two different persons. She had suddenly become a magnet stone, drawing him onward.

Mary's eyes opened wide in surprise. "France, Paul! why, we have but just reached home and have hardly begun to feel settled and comfortable again. Poor papa will be all broken up if we leave him so soon again."

"But, Mary, you don't understand; I—that is—you——" He faltered beneath the calm and steady gaze of the blue eyes, and for a moment neither spoke. Then Mary, with a suspicious tremor in her voice, asked, "Do you mean that you are to go to France—alone, Paul, and—and that I am to remain here in Australia?"

"Yes, little one, that is it. I would take you with me if I could, but it is not a pleasure trip, you know, and you would not enjoy it."

"But, Paul, I should not mind that part so long as we were together. I—I don't think I could bear to have you leave me."

"Come, be a little woman, Mary; it will only be for a few months at the most, and after such a separation it will seem all the nicer to be together again."

She did not answer him, and there was a tremulous movement about her lips as she nervously played with the buttons upon his coat. Suddenly looking up, she asked in a strangely quiet little voice, "You are quite a great man in France, are you not, Paul?"

Bourrienne threw back his head and laughed. "What are you up to now, little one?"

"Nothing, only I was thinking, that was all."

"Well, if that isn't a woman's answer all out! What were you thinking, Mary?"

"I was thinking, Paul, that in France you must associate with people quite different from us—papa and me—that is, with rich people, Paul."

"And that is what you call being a great man, is it? You little simpleton! How I wish poor old Maret could hear your logic; he would smile, I can assure you."

Mary made no remark upon the subject of Maret's smiling, but continued to fasten and unfasten the top button of Bourrienne's riding coat as if her very life depended upon the action.

"Paul," she said at length without looking up, "do you think I'm pretty?"

Bourrienne contemplated her for a moment in silence, then took the little downcast face between his hands and held it to the light. "Mary," he said, "I believe you are beginning to be actually jealous of me."

"No, no, Paul," she cried indignantly. "I'm not jealous—it's not that, but I was afraid—that is, I thought perhaps, when you returned to your old home and your old associates, people who are much more interesting and more

talented than I, that you might forget your poor little commonplace wife."

"Oh, nonsense, little one; what sentimental rubbish you are talking to-day?"

Two little arms stole about his neck, and a golden head was buried upon his shoulder. "Please, Paul, take me with you; I will be good and not be in your way at all," and the sound of a stifled sob arose from his breast.

For a moment he hesitated; he would keep away from France altogether; his place was here, in Australia. Then came another thought. His honor was at stake. He had unwittingly acted the part of an unprincipled coward toward another woman; he must go and explain; he must set himself right in her eyes —then all would be over, and he would return to Australia never more to leave it.

"Come, come, Mary! don't be a baby. I'd give up the journey if I could, dear, but it's a question of honor, and I must go. We'll change the subject now, life is too short for such squabbling. Let us go in search of your father."

On the morrow, with tear-dimmed eyes, and lips that trembled despite her efforts to remain calm and cheerful, Mary Bourrienne bade her husband good-bye. He had mounted his horse and was looking down upon her as she clung affectionately to his hand.

"Good-bye, Paul. Take care of yourself, and come back to me soon."

He leaned from the saddle and pressed his lips to the bright curls upon her forehead. Then spurring his horse he rode away. Mary stood motionless where he had left her, and watched his retreating figure until nothing remained to view but a little cloud of brownish dust upon the winding road. Then she turned and entered the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

A VIGIL ON LA RUE ST. DENIS.

WITH what mingled emotions of hope, gratitude and love does the wanderer from home and country once again set foot upon his native soil; with what blissful dreams does he look forward to the greetings of friends and loved ones, awaiting to hail with delight his safe return; how softened are the pangs of absence by loving words and heart-felt greetings; how relieved the temporary loneliness by the thought that a home and loved ones exist for him. Alas for him to whom the blessed name has no significance, the wanderer who stands, "homeless near a thousand homes," desolate and lonely in the midst of bustling life.

Perhaps these were the thoughts that were at work in Bourrienne's mind as he found himself once more in Paris. Certain it is that his reflections were very far from pleasant as the familiar landmarks met his eye. Dismissing the cab that had carried him from the railway station, he turned up the collar of his coat, and pulling his hat well over his eyes,

set out toward the upper end of the city. A drizzling rain had begun to fall, and a heavy mist, laden with the odor of tarred ropes and eel-grass, arose from the banks of the Seine, bringing with it that peculiar reminder of the sea which is often to be noticed near great bodies of fresh water.

At dusk he found himself in la Rue St. Denis, and walking slowly by upon the opposite side of the way, he surveyed the Carbonnet house with painful feelings of emotion. He was not afraid of recognition, for the lights were burning and the shades drawn down. He imagined he could distinguish the stout form of Madame Carbonnet in a shadow that occasionally glided across the curtain of a lower room, seemingly occupied in trying the effect of some garment before a mirror. There was another figure, seated between the light and the window, which, despite the hideously distorted profile thrown by the wavering gas flame, Bourrienne concluded was Monsieur taking his after-dinner smoke. The form he looked for was not there.

How long he stood in the drizzling rain, gazing at the familiar place would have been hard to tell. A subtle fascination seemed to chain his footsteps. No thought of making his presence known entered his head; he would rather have faced a cannon's volley just then,

than the suave but shallow tongue of Madame Carbonnet, or the meek but equally insipid one of Monsieur.

Electric lights began to spring into life along the street, revealing the rapidly increasing puddles, and causing the wet pavements to shine with a polish like marble. A few hurrying pedestrians turned and glanced curiously at the silent figure standing upon the curbing, apparently oblivious to time, place or element. There was but one thought in his mind—Julie, he must see her, speak to her. She must know him for what he was, not for what he seemed. He crossed the street and plucked an ivy leaf, dripping with rain, from the wall; then laughed and cast it away in the gutter. What had he to do with sentiment? Curse the luck! He would go away and wait for a better night. He might have known that no success awaited him. Things always went that way; it was just as poor old Maret used to say, "The unlucky dog can always lay claim to the greatest number of kicks and cuffs."

He walked to the corner of an adjoining street and stood watching the tiny circles widen and disappear upon the puddles as the raindrops struck the surface. A few people were hurrying along the thoroughfare, some with umbrellas held close over their shoulders, others muffled to the chin in rain-coats or

ulsters. A sleepy-looking gendarme was trying the doors of the houses as he walked leisurely along, whistling a fragment of a Polonaise opera. Bourrienne looked at his watch. The hands pointed to the half-hour after nine. He had been loitering about la Rue St. Denis for just one hour and twenty minutes. One of the city hands, wrapped in oil-skins, had approached the corner and was examining the drain. The water was swirling down the gutter, and falling with a bubbling sound through the iron grating into the darkness below. "It's going to be a wet night, colonel," he said, glancing curiously at Bourrienne's clothes. The latter made some inarticulate rejoinder and, turning, strolled slowly back.

A car had stopped in the street beyond, and a woman had alighted and was approaching rapidly along la Rue St. Denis. She was dressed in a long storm-cloak and hood, but carried no umbrella, and as she passed Bourrienne in the brightly lighted street, her features were plainly discernible. With a start of surprise he recognized her. It was Julie! His heart began to thump like a trip-hammer in his breast. The moment had come, yet he passed on. The meeting had been too sudden—he must recover his composure ere he addressed her. At the end of the block

he glanced back. She had turned in the street and was looking after him. Pulling his hat still further over his face to cover its paleness, and pressing his lips tightly together to keep them from trembling, he walked slowly back. The girl had turned and was hurrying toward the house.

"Julie!" It was scarcely more than a pleading whisper, uttered as though a soul was at stake, but she heard it and paused at the door. Something white fluttered for a moment in the night, then she was gone. Bourrienne understood. That little signal meant—farewell forever. She had misinterpreted his coming; she denied him even one little word; and with a groan of anguish he turned away. For hours longer he wandered about the Rue St. Denis, scarcely knowing where he was or what he did. Once he collided with a man at the street corner, and as each drew back their eyes met, and a look of stony recognition passed between them. It was the actor, St. John. Both bowed coldly and passed on.

Long into the night Bourrienne watched for a light in the upper rooms of the Carbonnet house, but none appeared. Julie Carbonnet, with her head buried in her arms, was kneeling at the window in her darkened room, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Toward morning he went away, and turning

into the Boulevard Voltaire, startled Madame Collot, the concierge, by ringing up her household two hours before daylight, and walking in and up the stairs as if he had left there but the day previous. Half doubting the evidence of her senses, the worthy lady gave him the key of his rooms, and then hurried down to tell Collot how young Bourrienne, soaked through with rain, and looking like a ghost, had, after twenty-eight months, come back to claim his apartments.

Everything in the little suite looked just as he had left it upon that night so long ago. Evidently Madame's rooms had been little in demand. There was poor Maret's walking-stick resting in the corner, and his cap lying where he had last thrown it upon the back of a chair; his own cigar stand upon the little table by the fireplace, with the remains of a half-smoked cigar; and even the book he had last been reading, *Les Miserables*, turned face downward upon the couch.

Feeling much like a resuscitated Rip Van Winkle, Bourrienne threw himself upon the bed without removing his clothes, thinking viciously that their dampness might provoke a fever and thus end his existence, and lay until morning, listening to the rain pattering against the window panes, and wishing that, for once, God would turn back the universe

and give him the last few years to live again. Toward nine o'clock the next day, his senses became dulled by weakness and exhaustion, and he slept far into the afternoon, awaking at last when a heavy dray rumbled by upon the cobble-stones below.

In the evening he arose, and performing his toilet with rather a reckless disregard for appearances, started out along the Boulevard Voltaire toward the center of the city. He would make one more desperate effort. If that failed he would—well, he would go back to Australia without having accomplished that for which he had come, that was all; and he kicked an unoffending toad into the gutter with such vindictive force that the startled reptile rolled over three times, and then came to a halt with its white under-side turned upward to the sky, the grainy throat quivering with surprise and indignation.

Everything looked as it had upon the previous night, in the Rue St. Denis, save that the rain had ceased and the puddles had been partly dried up by the sun's heat throughout the day. It was just dusk, that interim between daylight and dark when one considers it too early to light the gas-jets, and yet too late to read or otherwise employ the eyes, and Bourrienne could hear voices from behind the vines upon the veranda, where, no doubt,

the family had gathered to enjoy the first cool breath of the evening ere they lighted the house and drew the shutters.

He leaned against a fence in the shadow of the opposite house, and waited. Perhaps Julie might be tempted by the beauty of the night to walk out, he thought; or perhaps, and the blood rushed to his face at the idea, she might have relented and would watch for him. Then his thoughts flew back to Australia, and his heart gave a guilty pang, as a little golden head appeared before his mental vision, and two sorrowful eyes looking up with mute appeal into his own guilty ones. What right had he to care whether Julie Carbonnet gave him a moment's thought or otherwise? Just then a figure appeared at the head of the veranda steps, and after standing for a few moments as if quietly surveying the night, descended and approached the gate. Bourrienne recognized it instantly. It was Monsieur. Simultaneously the thought entered his mind, why not make his presence known to the little man, and enlist his sympathies in order that he might intercede for him with Julie? Monsieur had never failed him yet.

Drawing near with the pretense of asking for a light, he gained Monsieur's attention, and then leaning toward him as he took the proffered match, he whispered, "It's Bour-

rienne—hush! Don't say anything, but follow me after a few minutes—I want to have a talk with you."

Agreeably startled, Monsieur, after one or two covert glances in the direction of the porch, followed to the corner of the street. He was delighted, he said, to see "Mon petit Paul" again. Had he been long in the city? He had heard of his marriage some time ago, and wished to offer congratulations at the time, but did not know just where a letter would find him, he seemed to be flying about so restlessly. Would he not come in and see the folks?

Then Bourrienne told him all. Ah, Monsieur knew, he always knew "Mon petit Paul" was a man of honor. It was all that d——d announcement; he had felt from the first that that was it. But despite this assertion, Monsieur offered no explanation as to how the announcement had come into the papers, or why it was put there. He had personal reasons for not doing so. Nor did Bourrienne ask him. It made but little difference now. At this juncture Madame's shrill call was heard in the distance; Monsieur had strayed beyond his tether and must go back. He quickly divulged a little scheme which he thought would work. Bourrienne should go around to the rear of the house and wait near the garden. Mean-

while he, Monsieur, would hunt Julie up, he believed she was somewhere about the place, and send her out in search of a meerschaum he had left there that morning. Bourrienne must manage the rest, and with a hasty grasp of the hand the little man was gone.

Bourrienne followed his instructions, and, figuratively speaking, with his heart in his mouth, and his knees feeling strangely shaky beneath him, waited in the rear of the house until he saw a white dress emerge from the doorway and flutter down the path among the trees. Then he vaulted the fence and followed.

As Julie turned to retrace her steps, having found what she sought, Bourrienne confronted her. She drew back with a little gasp, but uttered no cry of alarm. There had been but one image in her mind that day, and now the fact that that image had appeared in reality before her, could serve but little to alarm her. She was silent, but only for a moment.

"How you startled me, Monsieur de Bourrienne!" she said. "I thought at first you were a ghost. You are looking for my uncle, I suppose. Will you not come in? It is some time now since you called, if I remember rightly. Perhaps you have been out of town?"

Bourrienne looked at her in amazement for a moment. Then he understood. It was too dark to see her features, but he knew what

otherwise he would have read there. Her eyes were saying: "There is a difference now, you know. There must be none but the most formal conversation between us. I am a Carbonnet, and we Carbonnets glory in our pride."

"No, Mlle. Carbonnet, it was you whom I sought," he said.

"Indeed!" That word spoke volumes. What could he have to say to her, Julie Carbonnet? and why had he not called at the house instead of following her out there? This and more, it said.

He had received his cue, and he would abide by it.

"I shall detain you but a moment. There has been some misunderstanding, that is, I think there has, and I wish to set myself right in your eyes. There was, I believe (perhaps you have forgotten it ere this) a certain agreement, if such it may be called, between you and myself the last time we met. This, owing to certain reasons, I believed to be cancelled. You know the rest." He spoke the few words calmly, quietly, without a pause or stammer, and he put about as much expression into them as a child would put into its first recitation. He wondered if she could hear his heart beat.

"Oh, it is all right. You need not have taken all this trouble, Monsieur de Bourrienne.

I had, indeed, for the time forgotten, but it does not matter. Will you not come in? Madame Carbonnet will be delighted to see you, and I am sure my uncle will. We have had but few callers lately; this part of the season is always dull in the city, don't you think so?"

"Thank you, not to-night; it is late. Besides—that is—some other time."

"Then I shall have to say good night," she said, backing slowly toward the house.

Bourrienne lifted his hat; he even smiled as he turned away, but his "Good night" sounded rather shaky in his own ears. Then he did what any nine men out of ten would have done, leaned his head against the gate-post and burst into tears. Put yourself in his place. Big drops welled up in Julie's eyes, and a lump arose in her throat, but she choked it back, and tried to think of something to do or say. Her feminine art had vanished, it was not proof against another's sufferings. Moving softly toward him, she laid her hand gently upon the bowed head. "Can you be less a man than I a woman, Paul de Bourrienne?" she said.

He lifted his head and looked into her face with a strange look in his own. Then clasping her to him, he kissed her lips, and hair and eyes, and rushed away in the darkness.

For an hour longer he wandered about like one insane, swearing vengeance against himself and the whole of creation. He even wandered down to the Seine, and leaning against the pillars of the Quay Bonaparte, looked down into the black water so intently that a gendarme came and stood beside him, watching suspiciously. But he laughed in the fellow's face and turned away. No, the name of Bourrienne should never be associated with that of suicide.

Then reason began to assert its sway, and he cursed his own weakness. He would go back to Australia, back to the girl through whose innocent existence he had lost so much. Yes, to-morrow it should be Australia and—home.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAGET'S STORY.

IT was near midnight when Bourrienne found himself in the Avenue de l'Opéra, and feeling weak and exhausted (for he had eaten but one meal since leaving the steamer) he entered the familiar portals of the National Clubhouse, in order to renew with stimulants his failing energies.

A few stragglers, still in evening dress, were loitering about the "lounge," but with hardly a glance in their direction, Bourrienne was passing on to the wine room, when a hand was clapped upon his shoulder and he turned to behold Alexandre Paget. The little fellow was greatly surprised. Was Bourrienne a "spirit of truth or goblin damned," that he had the power of flitting about in such an uncanny manner? However, he was just the man that he, Alexandre Paget, wanted to see, and would he not come right away to some place where they could have a private talk?

Bourrienne reluctantly assented, and the other led the way to a private dining-room at the rear of the hall. "By Jove, old man," he

said, seating himself astride a leather chair, "it seems as though you were sent by Providence, for had you not put in an appearance the moment you did, I should have gone to Australia for you."

"Why, what's up, Paget?"

"Well, you just listen to me for a few minutes without interrupting, and if you don't open your eyes in amazement before I have concluded, I am greatly mistaken.

"Over a year ago, Paul de Bourrienne suddenly leaves Paris—now don't get impatient, old man, this preliminary is essential—without a word of farewell to his friends or any explanation whatever as to his behavior, leaving those persons who are good enough to worry about him, in a rather perplexed and anxious state of mind as to his whereabouts. Soon, however, the announcement of his father's sudden death explains everything, and Bourrienne's friends are waiting to welcome him back and to offer condolence for his trouble, when suddenly they are startled by the report that he has left the country, taking with him a wife whom he married privately a few days after his father's death. No remonstrances, now, Bourrienne; wait until I have finished. From that day nothing is heard of Monsieur de Bourrienne. No one seems to know just where he has

gone, and not one of his friends ever happens to set eyes upon him. Now here comes the strange part of my tale. In the early part of this year I marry and go with my wife to England. We meet very few people whom we know in our travels, and by the time we arrive in London, the fact that we are strangers in a strange land, is emphatically impressed upon both our minds, and we are beginning, despite our mutual assertions to the contrary, to feel just a trifle lonesome. While in this frame of mind, imagine my surprise and pleasure when, glancing over the hotel register, I behold the familiar inscription, 'Paul de Bourrienne, Pierrepont, France.'

"I enquire at the desk and find, greatly to my disappointment, that M. de Bourrienne has left for his own country upon the previous day. Later, after returning home, I again see his name at a hotel in Versailles, but meet with a like disappointment in view of the fact that he has left that place also before my arrival. I think no more about the circumstance, and several months later I embark for Australia, being called there upon business of my father's. Wishing to make the trip as pleasant as possible for my wife, I take apartments outside the city at a place called Rockhampton—I know this seems monotonous and superfluous, Bour-

rienne, but wait. I take apartments at Rockhampton and prepare to spend a week or so in the enjoyment of the sea breezes. We have been there several days when, for the third time, I discover that Bourrienne and I have again chosen the same resort. This time I am more successful. I interview him upon the following day, and although he is reticent to a certain extent about his own affairs, I learn enough to puzzle me. He tells me that after his father's death he embarked immediately for Australia, in which country he avows he has remained ever since, living at a little place outside of Ballarat, and only leaving it to come to Rockhampton on his wedding journey, having recently married a little Australian girl. Food for thought! I assure you I was puzzled, Paul.

"Well, now for a change of tense. I returned to France, fully resolved to fathom the affair, for although you seemed scarcely to give the matter a thought, I was a prey to certain grave suspicions. It is not uncommon for people to masquerade in borrowed plumes, and the thought entered my mind that perhaps some unprincipled character was playing fast and loose with your name. Well, I made inquiries as to the supposed whereabouts of young Bourrienne, and was told

that he was summering at a place upon the south shore. To this place I went, feeling very much like a detective upon a vague scent. There was only one hotel in the town, a high-toned place full of summer tourists. I called, and the clerk sent a boy up to M. de Bourrienne's room. In a few moments he returned, saying that that gentleman was engaged upon important business, and would I call again? Well, I stayed over in the house, and the next morning at about eleven o'clock sent my card up to thirty-four (that was his number) only to find that M. and Mme. de Bourrienne had departed in the night, having been called away by the sudden illness of a relative. Then I scented something shady, Bourrienne. I knew that there were not two Paul de Bourriennes in a little place like Pierrepont, and I was bound to find a solution of the matter, although it was perhaps no concern of mine. Accordingly, instead of attending to my own affairs, what did I do but hunt up your lawyer and state the case just as I have stated it to you. He hemmed and hawed and thanked me for my trouble, but offered no suggestions of any kind, nor did he seem at all disturbed or surprised at my story. I thought I was doing something very clever, but I must say I was a little squelched by the reception I got. Despite

his apparent unconcern, though, I am pretty sure the old guy was moved by what I told him. My next step would have been to hunt you up, but since you have come of your own accord, you have saved me that trouble."

Bourrienne had arisen with an oath upon his lips, and began to pace the small room, a habit of his when perplexed.

"O, and I forgot," continued the other; "I took a clipping from a country paper yesterday —let me see, I wonder if I have it with me— well, anyway, it said that M. and Mme. de Bourrienne and child had arrived at Pierrepont for the season, or something to that effect. Good Heavens! what a nerve the fellow must have! He evidently believes you dead. If I could have gotten out of old Du Maurier all I am inclined to think he knows, we would have something to work on. The best course for you to pursue, Bourrienne, is to go to him at once and have matters straightened out."

"No, I shall go to Pierrepont first and face the cur. You may go to Du Maurier if you will, Paget, and tell him I have arrived in Paris, and appoint a meeting with him for me for to-morrow."

"All right, Paul, give the fellow h–ll, but be careful of yourself. These reckless devils stop at nothing."

They left the club and walked along the

Avenue for a few paces, and then turned into an obscure by-street which led to la Rue St. Honoré. As Bourrienne stopped beneath a flickering gas-jet to light a cigar, his companion studied his face attentively. "What put it into your head to come to Paris, Bourrienne?" he asked, assuming a careless tone.

Bourrienne leisurely finished his lighting process, discarded the match, and took a prolonged pull, before replying; then with just a suspicion of annoyance in his voice, he said, "I had business here, Paget." Then they continued their way in silence, each perfectly aware of what was passing in the other's mind. At the corner Bourrienne took a cab for the railway station. The train schedule had been changed since that night long ago. If he hurried he might perhaps reach Pierrepont the first thing in the morning. Paget continued on to the office of Lucien Du Maurier. Despite the lateness of the hour, he found the little man busy as usual in the midst of confusing heaps of sealed documents and official letters, but he arose at once upon seeing who his visitor was.

"Be seated, Monsieur, I shall attend to you in just a moment."

"No, I shall not stop; I only called to say that Paul de Bourrienne, that is, the real Bourrienne, my friend and your client, is in town

and wishes me to appoint a meeting with you for to-morrow evening. Meanwhile he has gone to Pierrepont."

The old man started, and his face assumed an expression of alarm. "To Pierrepont, you say! When? What train?"

"He has probably taken the first he could get after midnight. He left me ten minutes ago."

Without further attention to his visitor, Du Maurier hurriedly removed his hat and coat from a peg in the wall and, having put them on, proceeded to close and lock his desk, muttering the while as if communing with his thoughts, "They must not meet alone, there would be words, and then—"

He extinguished the lights without a word of apology to his caller, leaving the latter to find his way to the street as best he could, and when that difficult feat was at length accomplished by both, started off toward the center of the city at a gait that did credit to his old limbs despite the fact that it resembled that of an over-burdened dromedary.

Paget stopped to turn up his trousers, for it had begun to rain again, and then continued his way in the opposite direction, quietly laughing to himself as he mused, "Of all specimens of abrupt humanity, that is the strangest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN THE DEAD WALK.

FOR the first time since he was a curly-haired child in velvet kilt and Van Dyke collar, Paul de Bourrienne stepped from the train at Pierrepont, and made his way on foot along the private road that led through his estate, the house being situated at a distance of two miles from the village, in the midst of a forest of larch and oak. His memory had retained very little trace of the place and its surroundings, and he was obliged to make inquiries in the town as to the route he should follow, fearing to trust to a faint, glimmering remembrance which hovered in his brain, as to the direction and appearance of the lonely old place; a remembrance, indeed, so faint and unreliable, that it might well be confounded with imagination.

The road was soft and damp, and bore an untravelled appearance, for great clumps of green grass obscured the ruts in places, and even overhung the narrow track where, with parrot-like precocity, each four-footed creature had followed in the footsteps of his predecessor.

The lower branches of the larch trees were allowed to revel in peaceful unrestraint, and they overhung the lonely road to such an extent that in certain parts their scraggly boughs met and formed a green canopy, practically obstructing the passage, and ready to scatter their brittle cones upon the head of the daring pedestrian who was bold enough to force a way.

"This can't be the carriage road," thought Bourrienne. "I must have made a mistake; however, I'll keep on and see where it takes me."

Inclined, like all persons when alone, to study trivial characteristics in his surroundings, he was struck by the forsaken and gloomy appearance of every stick and blade of grass, and his soul was filled with sadness as he mused, "Poor old man, how lonely he must have been in this desolate spot."

He had travelled so far upon the woody path without beholding any signs of a dwelling or habitation of any kind, that he was beginning to fear that he had been misdirected, when suddenly the road widened, and a stone gateway, over which the ivy had grown rank and wild, loomed in view. The gate being unlocked, Bourrienne entered and continued along the woody road within, sadly surveying the quiet scenery upon either side, and wondering why he had never felt interest enough in the place

to visit it before. Mulberry and whortleberry thrived along the roadside; the spreading branches of the red oak and hazel met and caressed overhead; pretty gray squirrels played at hide and seek in the interstices of the crude, improvised wall of rounded rocks, to which the death-hued lichens and tenacious ivy clung; wood violets and anemones showed their dainty heads amidst damp masses of forest green; and away to the left, where the ground sloped down to the river bank, waving masses of *fleurs-de-lis* showed blue against the yellow marshland. The oriole called from his hanging nest high overhead, and the warning tap of the woodpecker echoed from the hollow bark of some decaying oak or hazel, as it routed out its insect prey. Copious Nature revelled there, unimpaired by the hand of man, unhandicapped by the idiosyncrasies of narrow-minded art.

He had followed the drive for about a quarter of a mile, and was about to cut off its winding course by crossing the park to where the red roofs of the buildings gleamed through the trees, when he beheld a lady approaching with a book in her hand, followed at a distance by a little child who gleefully and unmercifully dragged a wax doll by the hair. As Bourrienne passed the former, he raised his hat, and was greeted by an inquiring and puzzled look

from a pair of dark eyes as, by a slight inclination of the head, she acknowledged the courtesy. The child had loitered far behind to fill its tiny fists with the soft loam of the road bed, and as Bourrienne approached it smiled up into his face and displayed its rather damaging spoils. Bourrienne stopped and, taking the bright little creature in his arms, asked, "What is your name, little one?"

"Paul," it lisped, placing one grimy hand in its mouth and with the other besmearing Bourrienne's collar.

"Paul what, dear?"

"Paul de Bourrienne, and that's my mamma," taking the tiny hand from its mouth to point toward the lady who had passed. "What's your name?"

"I am beginning to wonder, baby. Give me a kiss, and then run along to your mamma,"

The child, seemingly reluctant to part so soon with its newly found acquaintance, stood watching him for a few moments as with head bowed in thought he continued up the drive. Then it turned and scampered after its mother.

At last the mansion, old and weather-beaten, loomed up before Bourrienne, and he paused to view the grim yet grand old place. "And this is where his last days were spent; this is where he died! Poor old dad! It was a fitting habitation for such a noble soul as yours. You were

a kind father to a reckless and undeserving son; despite my wild and wandering ways, you never rebuked me. Perhaps if you had done so, I would not now have so much to regret."

Advancing beneath the granite entrance-portico, upheld by its massive scagliola columns, Bourrienne sounded the gong and then drew back toward the railing to wait. In the course of a few minutes a gray-haired servant appeared, who, having opened the door to the distance of scarcely more than a foot, stared at the visitor in mute surprise.

"Is your master at home?"

"Ay, sir; will you step in, or shall I deliver a message for you?"

"I wish to see him."

Admitting the visitor with evident reluctance, he led the way with stooped shoulders and rheumatic gait along the gloomy hall to a reception room at the end, and then stood awaiting Bourrienne's card. The latter turned and faced him, and then removing the slouch hat which partly concealed his features, he asked, "Pierre, don't you know me?"

With a perceptible start the old man seemed to take in the form and features before him, and as he gazed scrutinizingly at young Bourrienne's face, he murmured aloud, "Philippe de Bourrienne for all the world, when he was a boy at college!"

"Then if I so resemble the late Philippe de Bourrienne, who should I be but his son?"

The old butler, gaping with amazement, at length managed to articulate, "Who are you, sir?"

"Hush! shut the door and listen! I am Paul de Bourrienne, the only son of Philippe de Bourrienne, and he who has been living here under my name, spending my money, domineering my servants and usurping my rights, is an impostor of the deepest dye."

A trembling fit seized the aged limbs of Pierre Favre as, with a look which plainly showed that he doubted the evidence of his senses, he took in the words of the man before him. "It cannot be, it cannot be," he muttered half aloud, "and yet he has the face." Suddenly, as if endeavoring to uphold the dignity of his office by defending the master he served, he straightened his rheumatic limbs and stooping shoulders as best he could, and cried out, "I don't believe you, sir!"

"Then the proof! my mother!"

The old servant, white with emotion, gazed upon the pictured face for a moment, then stretching out his arms, he clasped young Bourrienne in their embrace. "Forgive me, Master Paul, you see I hadn't seen you since the days when I used to carry you a child in arms through these old rooms." Here the old

man's voice broke and tears rolled down his withered cheeks. "Welcome home, young master, welcome home. Ah! often has this old brain been puzzled—puzzled. That young master Paul should forget to shake the hand of his old servant when he came home after his poor father's death, cut this old heart to the core; but I would say to myself, 'Ah, Pierre, my boy, they all change when they go out into the world, and we can't expect the man to remember the friends of his childhood.' But who is this other? I always imagined he had the Bourrienne face—but not the Bourrienne heart, not the Bourrienne heart, boy."

"I have that yet to find out; but first, Pierre, tell me of my father; you were with him at the last, perhaps?" Drawing a chair forward, he bade the old man be seated, while he himself paced the hearth-rug with ill concealed excitement.

"No, no, Master Paul, I know nothing, I was not there," the old servant stammered.

"Did he die a peaceful death? You must know that. But, ah, I see the subject pains you, Pierre," and the tears arose to his own eyes at the sight of the old man's emotion.

"Now comes the critical moment, Pierre. Send your master to me—but no, stay—where is he?"

"In the library, sir; he often spends his mornings there alone of late."

"Then conduct me to him."

Again the old man led the way through the silent hall, with slow, unsteady steps. When the library door was reached, Bourrienne dismissed him, and turning the knob gently, entered alone and closed the door after him. At a glance he took in the apartment and its occupant. The library at the Pierrepont house was a gloomy old room, but rendered more grand and impressive by that very gloom. Heavy curtains of crimson tapestry in some foreign design draped the long, arched windows and fell in heavy folds upon the dark velvet carpet. The walls were lined with the literary collections of dead and gone Bourriennes, collections made no doubt with a view to self-gratification, but destined to grace the book-shelves of future generations. In niches between the windows busts of poets and historians gleamed white against the heavy curtains—the humanitarian Homer, with his sightless orbs; Dante side by side with his idol, Virgil; Aristotle, the very curve of whose marble lips seemed breathing of eloquence. In the center of the room a bronze group, representing the demi-god Cadmus expounding to the Greeks his immortalized theory, took precedence of the other groups of statuary and seemed to hold sway over the lesser literary deities.

Seated in a high-backed chair at the extreme end of the apartment, before the immense fire-place guarded by its heavy brass rail and andirons, was a man of whom only the arm and hand were visible, as he held a richly bound volume to the light; and so deeply was his mind riveted upon its pages, that he heeded not the opening and closing of the library door. Bourrienne, from where he stood, could easily decipher the title of the volume; it was the Odes of Horace. A smile of sarcasm wreathed his lips, and he murmured, "Cultured, eh? And yet he stoops from the classics to infamy! Learning is indeed a fitting livery for the devil."

A few steps over the soft carpet, and then with a gasp of surprise Bourrienne stood still. A familiar profile met his eye—clearly cut, regular features surmounted by dark, waving hair. The reader, believing some servant had entered, did not glance up, and Bourrienne, crossing the room, leaned one elbow upon the marble mantel and stood gazing down upon his face. "Good morning—Paul de Bourrienne," he said.

A scarcely perceptible jerk of the hands as they held the heavy volume, a writhing movement of the shoulders; then slowly, as if in fear of some direful sight, a pair of startled eyes were raised to the speaker's face, and

there remained riveted in horrified wonder, while the very lips became deathly white. For a moment each held the other's gaze with a strange fascination, and then Bourrienne asked, as he slowly lighted a cigarette and placed it between his lips, "Why so startled, my dear Bourrienne? Do you, like Hamlet, take me for an uncanny visitant from another world, or, along with the worthy Thane of Cawdor, have your disturbed thoughts conjured up some strange, unhealthy fancies? If so, be at ease, for I am of flesh and blood."

"I—I believed you dead," gasped the other, as he arose slowly to his feet, still gazing upon Bourrienne's face.

"Ah—'The times have been, when the brains were out the man would die, and there an end; but now they rise again'—is that it? Unfortunately I am very much alive, Jean Maret, and have come to demand restitution from one of the most cowardly curs upon earth; a sneaking villain, a crawling, creeping thing, who seeks to elevate himself above his station by reviling means; who gains his cowardly ends by tricks that a dog would turn from; who rejoices in the supposed death of a friend because he may reach across his corpse and gather in his ghastly spoils; who stops not at treachery if the reward is worth the trouble; who lives a glaring lie in the face of God, and,

lacking soul and conscience, is disturbed not by that lie! A cowardly confiscator of another man's rights! A cringing hound unworthy of mercy! A traitor, a coward and a thief! Were it not for the woman who is so unfortunate as to be your wife, and the innocent child who is cursed in calling you father, I should feel tempted to end you where you stand!"

Bourrienne's light, sarcastic mood had given place to a furious anger, and no term seemed too reviling to heap upon the head of the man before him, who listened, pale and cowering, venturing neither word nor explanation in self-defence. He stood stunned and unbelieving, wondering if he were in a dream or trance, or if it were in reality Paul de Bourrienne who stood before him. But Jean Maret's was not a nature to remain cowed when driven to bay; and with a look of sullen defiance he turned suddenly upon the other, and hissed between his clinched teeth: "A traitor, eh! a coward and a thief! You will perhaps lay my story before the world; you will perhaps see me condemned for forgery and theft; you will perhaps give me up to the authorities and spread my crime broadcast throughout the country. I say, *perhaps*. A coward, a liar, a thief! Ay, *but what are you?* You may revile me before the world, treat me as a dog who has stolen from your table; you *may* do all this, but you will not! You dare not!"

"The veriest villain will threaten ere he begs for mercy. 'Tis a part of his cowardice," replied the other.

"No, I do not ask your mercy; but if I did crave it, you would not deny it me. It is you who will be begging my mercy, who will be craving upon your knees for my silence and leniency. Bah! what is my disgrace to yours?"

"Are such ravings a part of the plot? If so, continue, and I will listen for charity's sake."

"Charity be d——d! I want none of yours. I have nothing to lose, whatsoever disposition you take; but how about you? What would the world say if the name of the late Philippe de Bourrienne should be dragged still lower in the dust, a prey for scandal-mongers and evil-minded? How would the younger Bourrienne, his son, stand in society when the shocking fact was revealed to the light of day? How, I say? Ah! you begin to look interested. You will listen now, and when I have finished you will drop upon your knees and pray for silence; ay, for the noble son ever shields his parents, eh, Bourrienne?"

"Madman! what do you mean by your profitless ravings? How dare you contaminate the names of the dead with your foul lips?"

Maret leaned forward with an evil glitter in his eye, and hissed one word. It acted like an electric current upon his listener. Like a

young tiger suddenly let loose, Bourrienne fell upon the man before him and hurled him backward, his head striking upon the heavy brass work of the fender railing as he fell. Blood spattered the marble mantel and stained the white hearth, mingling with and washing out a darker spot which for many long months had sullied its whiteness; and Paul de Bourrienne, with pale face and set features, gazed upon his ghastly work.

The door opened softly, and the little, shrivelled-up form of the old lawyer glided in.

"Merciful God, boy! What have you done? Down upon your knees and pray for God's mercy, for the world will give you none. You have killed your brother!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LA ROQUETTE.

ROQUETTE! Gloomy, bare and loathsome Roquette! Home of felons, forgers, thieves; last earthly shelter of murderous humanity; final refuge of brutal crime; abode of wretchedness, misery and regret. Ope thy ponderous doors to the world and let mankind be appalled by the heartrending scenes that thy walls contain; let but thy wretched inmates behold the light of day, for a glance from their haggard eyes, or a pitiful cry from their parched lips, can never pollute the free air of Heaven or cause God's sun to shine less brilliantly for the rest of humankind!

Weighed down by sullen and bitter despair, Paul de Bourrienne sat in his narrow cell, hearing, yet heeding not, the words of the old lawyer, who, with the inconsistency born of sorrow and excitement, was endeavoring to counsel resignation and defiance at one and the same time, and trying in his abrupt but well-meant way to lighten the prisoner's weight of misery. He had followed Bourrienne to Paris, whither the latter had gone to give himself up; and now with the peculiar persistency

which characterized his disposition, a disposition quick to form likes and dislikes, he clung to the son of his dead friend, hardly knowing why he did so. Before leaving Pierrepont he had poured into Bourrienne's horrified ear the story of his father's sin, his death, his own disgrace, and, lastly, the astounding fact which, with the untiring energy and far-sightedness of his craft, he had elicited from thorough investigations in both his own country and England—the fact that the murdered man was the first born and only legitimate son of Philippe de Bourrienne and, therefore, the rightful heir to the Bourrienne estate. Bourrienne had listened as one dazed with wine, but had uttered no word. What could he say? Were not all the fiends of hell plotting against him?

"An awkward piece of work, boy; an awkward piece of work," murmured the old lawyer, clasping and unclasping his thin hands as he paced the narrow room. "But trust in God, lad, there may be hope yet."

"There is no God," replied the other sullenly; "or if there is, he is outwitted by the fiends below. Why talk to me of hope, old man? What have I to hope for? Why should I care to live—an outcast from society, a creature to be shunned, a man without a name save that of 'murderer,' a broken-down wretch, an unmitigated villain in the eyes of

all! No! I was born in imfamy, and I'll die in infamy! 'Tis a fitting end for such as I."

"Rail not against the Almighty, Paul de Bourrienne, and thus add sacrilege to crime. Ay, 'tis sad indeed that the sins of the parent should be visited upon the child, sad indeed."

"Speak not of him, sir; let his ashes rest. I do not blame him, for he, like myself, was enthralled by the devil and led unwittingly to his crime. 'He must needs go whom the devil drives!' Were not the world overflowing with evil spirits and criminal imps clothed in innocence, one might hope to pass through it with clean hands and a white heart; that being an impossibility, we must all be considered hell-hounds and profit accordingly."

"Such pessimism will not help you, lad. Cease that bitter railing and reflect calmly; remember, you have a wife."

"Yes, poor girl! would that I had never had the misfortune to darken her life! She must never know, Du Maurier; let her imagine herself deserted, myself lost or dead, but in God's name spare her the knowledge that she is the wife of a—a fratricide, a man without a name. She would never hear—the clamors of this busy world seldom penetrate to the little Australian settlement where she lives. Promise me, Du Maurier, that she shall never know."

The old lawyer clasped his hand, and then, being warned by the appearance of the jailer that his time was up, silently took his departure.

In the course of the day Alexandre Paget called to see the prisoner, but was denied admittance. Other friends came, among whom were good-hearted college chums and a few well disposed social acquaintances; but all met with a like denial from the prison officials. The story in painful detail was blazoned under double-column headlines throughout the city—all Paris buzzed with the horror. It provided an agreeable topic of interest for thirsting humanity.

The shocking news reached Julie Carbonnet's ears the evening after the occurrence, and locking herself in her room, she refused to see or speak to any one; not even would she see Monsieur, who, though quite as sadly depressed as she over the matter, endeavored to console her by repeatedly assuring her through the key-hole of his belief that in the end Bourrienne would be acquitted. They seldom executed in a case of that kind, he said; it was only the willful, brutal murders that called for capital punishment, and at the very worst it would mean but imprisonment for life. And then Monsieur would steal quietly away, secretly congratulating himself upon his natural gift of condolence.

Far away at Pierrepont, sadder scenes were being enacted. For days Gene de Bourrienne shrieked and wailed over the lifeless piece of clay, and beside her stood, at times, another, a girl with a pale yet emotionless face, a girl who had learned to suffer and make no sign—Lucile de Caulaincourt.

And alone in his narrow cell sat the man who, in a moment's fiery passion, had caused it all—alone with his thoughts, for they, God help him, would never leave him until they left with life. Countless scenes were shifting before his eyes, scenes of misery, sorrow and wailing, and he was the accursed cause of all —he who by some strange decree of Heaven, or of hell, more like, had been given passions over which he had no control. He covered his eyes with his hands, but these scenes still glared red before him, and groaning in agony and desperation, he threw himself across his narrow bunk, and lay until the last lingering ray of daylight withdrew from the dingy cell, and darkness and desolation shut in around him.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PLEA FOR A LIFE.

MANKIND is prone to believe that one moment of suspense is more to be deplored than whole weeks of conviction. It was the reverse with Julie Carbonnet. While the most shadowy vestige of a hope remained, patience with her could live and feast itself upon that hope; while there still existed a lingering belief that all would yet be well, she could borrow strength and endurance from that belief, and wait, and pray, and hope, even against reason, that in the end Paul de Bourrienne would be acquitted Through two long months she had waited, and then the shock came. She had rested her hopes upon a spider's thread, and had found out, alas! too late, its frailty.

Monsieur carried her the sad tidings, and then stood by with a wondering look upon his face. He never dreamed that little Julie could display such grit. She did not faint or cry out; that right belonged to another. Why should she display alarm or grief over Bourrienne's sentence? He was nothing to her. She might

turn ghastly white at the thought, for that was any woman's privilege when death upon the guillotine was in question. He had pleaded guilty, employed no counsel, offered no defence. For a moment the room swam around before Julie's eyes. Would Monsieur please leave her? She was tired and would lie down and rest. He need not tell Madame to send up her tea, as she would probably not care for any refreshment before morning.

But when once more alone, Julie made no pretence of lying down and going to sleep. She sat where Monsieur had left her, her head resting upon her hands and her eyes staring into vacancy. The afternoon merged into twilight, twilight into evening, and the evening into night, but it was hours ere she became aware that she was enveloped in darkness. Groping to the dresser, she struck a match, and, as she waited before the mirror for the sulphur to burn away, she caught a glimpse of her face within, made weird and ghastly by the bluish flame. She shuddered, glanced nervously behind her, and then held the flame quickly to the gas, feeling a tremor of relief when the room burst into light. Again she turned to the mirror and looked attentively at the reflection within. Her brown hair, tangled and uncombed, hung loosely about her shoulders, causing the small, pale face to

resemble that of a witch or gnome; the eyes were heavy and darkly circled, and the lips dry and cracked. Yet despite its careworn and dejected appearance, there was an expression of set determination upon Julie Carbonnet's face.

Closing and locking the door, she slipped off the light dress she wore, and replaced it by a dark street suit, over which she placed the long rain-cloak she had worn upon the night of her encounter with Bourrienne. Then unlocking a drawer in her dresser, she took therefrom a roll of bills and, placing them in her bosom, extinguished the light, opened the window and looked out along the street. All was deserted, for in the region of the Rue St. Denis, travel after night-fall, except by carriage, is very rare. A church clock upon the opposite corner was striking the half-hour after nine.

She closed the window and crept quietly out into the hall, locking her door from the outside; then she hurried along toward the back of the house, avoiding Madame's apartments by passing through an unused chamber on the east side of the house, and thence out upon a small veranda, from which a flight of steps led to the garden below. This feat accomplished, she slipped through the gate and on toward the center of the city. It was

a warm, oppressive night, and the heavy cloak proved a great incumbrance, causing her to feel fatigue before she had gone more than a hundred yards; but she hurried bravely forward, trying to imagine that she was not frightened at being out alone in Paris at so late an hour, yet starting at every shadow and glancing with distrust at every person whom she passed. Once, in the silence and darkness of the Rue Adrien, she imagined that she was followed, for a man had walked behind her all the way from the lighted boulevard and, in passing her, hesitated and looked into her face, his own being concealed by the collar of the surtout he wore.

At last, after traversing many dark streets and turning to look behind at every step, Julie reached the Rue de la Roquette, where the prison, black and still, loomed up before her. She crouched back in a narrow alley opposite the heavy iron gates, until all seemed quiet and deserted; then advancing with a quickly beating heart, she leaned against the rusty bars and waited for the sentinel to pass. To Julie it seemed as though hours had elapsed before the regular tramp, tramp, fell upon her ear, and her strength seemed giving away beneath her fear and suspense. Attracted by her faint call, the man drew near the gate, clutching his gun suspiciously, and asked who

was there. In a trembling voice Julie told her story: "There is a prisoner here called Bourrienne—I am his sister, man; for God's sake let me enter. If money will move you, take all I have."

At first a flat refusal met the pitiful plea. There were days appointed on which visitors were admitted, he said; let her go away and come on one of these. Then as the thought of the gold lingered in his brain he stood irresolute. Julie, seeing his hesitation, took the money from her bosom and held it toward him in the dim light.

"Open the gate and it is yours."

Only a moment did he hesitate; then stealing forward, he unfastened the heavy locks and admitted her, saying, "I warn you, girl, there are others to pass before you can reach young Bourrienne's cell; but if you have any more money about you, I think I can fix it up all right."

Julie hesitated, Should she give him all she had and run the risk of being refused by the other guards? Drawing a ring from her finger, she placed it in his hand. "Take that, it is valuable," she said; "I have no more money."

Grumbling audibly as if ill-satisfied, he bade her stand motionless in the shadow of the wall until he found out how the land lay. In a few

moments he returned and, bidding her follow him, led the way across the prison yard and up the stone steps. A stout, elderly man, whose features she could not discern, silently opened and closed the iron doors, and Julie found herself in La Roquette.

Not for days had Bourrienne closed his eyes in sleep, and upon the night after his trial, he was, as usual, staring vacantly at the floor of his dingy cell, and thinking of nothing in particular, when a key grated in the lock, the door opened to admit some one, and immediately closed. Looking up in surprise, he beheld a woman shrouded in a heavy cloak, which so concealed her face and figure that both were disguised beyond recognition. A sudden thought leaped into his mind that it was his wife who stood before him, and so confident was he in this belief, that he sprang to his feet with the cry, "Mary, little one, why did you come!"

A pang shot through the girl's heart, and a crimson blush arose to her face as, with shaking hands, she removed the hood and faced him.

"Julie! My God!"

Trembling with emotion, she gazed sadly upon his haggard features; then glancing nervously about her, she opened her lips and began to speak in a low, hurried voice. "Hush! do not speak above a whisper, or they will

overhear us, and then all will be lost. They say—the papers say, Paul de Bourrienne, that you have refused to employ counsel or in any way defend the crime for which you have been convicted; that you have settled down into a gloomy, sullen despondency, a hopeless despair, born of a dogged determination to mantain silence through it all, offering no plea, uttering no word that might exculpate or defend you. Is it so? Answer me."

"Yes, it is so. I have no plea to offer. I killed a man, and you know it is written, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Why should I offer defence for so barefaced a crime?"

"Ask your heart and it will tell you. Man was not made to give up life without a struggle —'tis against all nature, against the laws of God. Brace yourself, become a man, and let it not be said that a Bourrienne died in ignominy upon the guillotine."

White and trembling, he leaned against the narrow window of his cell.

"Why have you come here, girl? You have heard my story, you know what the world has to offer me—infamy, misery and disgrace! And yet you bid me cling to a life to which hell with its torments would be preferable; to which the bitterness of death, and the hopeless eternity which must follow for such as I, are

a relief, a cessation from torture. It would be madness, girl, to fight in such a cause; and even if I were craven cur enough to beg for a second trial, what jury would stoop to acquit a fratricide? No! I shall make no defence. Let them slaughter me."

"Paul de Bourrienne, this is madness! In the eyes of a just God you are held innocent of intent to kill, and should you persist in embracing in silence the horrible fate which now awaits you, you would be committing a crime against Heaven and your own soul."

"Julie, go, and think no more about me. You do not know what it means to be seen here, with a criminal; should your identity be discovered, it would bring dishonor upon a name as pure as snow. I have brought sorrow and ruin upon too many already. Go; and if there is a God above, He will bless you for this act of humanity and self-sacrifice. Your noble heart is troubled by the thought of a fellow creature's sufferings, but let it be at rest, girl, for I am not afraid to die. Perhaps if I were, it would be better for me. A momentary shock, a last pang, and all is over; do not weep, Julie, I am not worth it; the world will never miss such as I."

"Oh, how can you talk thus calmly in the face of death! Will you utter no word to save yourself? Will you have them kill you

like a dog? Think what it means, Bourrienne —death upon the guillotine! Long, long ago a Carbonnet suffered death from the knife, and although his innocence was afterwards proven, the name still suffers from the stigma. In God's name make some effort, man, and let it not be said of you!"

"I have no name to either lose or stain, Julie. My sentence has been passed, and it is death. You forget, girl, what the law is."

"Then you must escape from this horrible place while there is yet time. God has given me the means to save you. I gained access to your cell by bribery, and who knows what more gold may accomplish. The avaricious brutes who guard the place are ready to sell their souls for gain. I have money, gold, jewels, and with them you may buy your way to freedom; and even if these should fail, there would still be hope. With this cloak about you, you could crouch your figure to the height of a woman's and pass the guards without question. It has been done before, and why not again? Come, there is no time to lose!"

"And do you think, Julie, that I shall accept this sacrifice at your hands? No! a thousand times, no! It would level you in the dust, girl; besides, were the prison doors thrown open to me, I should not go forth."

The girl's face became a shade paler, if possible, and a frightened, pathetic look crept into her eyes. For a moment she gazed in silence upon the face before her, a face that resembled that of a corpse rather than a living being's; then drawing nearer, she knelt upon the stone floor of the cell, her hands clasped pleadingly before her, and her dark eyes overflowing with tears. Trembling like an aspen, Bourrienne turned away.

"Listen, and if you have a heart you will heed me! Paul de Bourrienne, I set aside my womanhood, my honor, my pride, my reputation, to come to you; and in the name of the mother who bore you, you will not refuse my prayers. Would you have that mother, who is innocent of all sin in this horrifying affair, look down from Heaven and see her boy upon the guillotine? Would you make her poor heart bleed at the knowledge that she had raised a son for such a death? For her sake, if not for your own, you will try to escape the awful penalty that awaits you."

"If she can look down upon this world, girl, she knows me to be a murderer. The sting of a well-merited death would be little in comparison to that."

"Then for the sake of the wife who loves you and knows nothing of your crime; who is waiting in prayers and tears, no doubt, for

your safe return, far away in some foreign land. Break through your prison walls and go to her, for she is a woman and her heart can break."

"No, Julie, the poor child must never know until I am under the sod. If one must have a murderer for a husband, 'twere better he were dead than in the flesh."

White with agony, the girl listened to his words. She had pleaded in vain; she had risked all, and for this. Before her stood a man whom neither prayers nor tears could move; a man who welcomed death, and stood immovable in his mad and sullen determination to let matters take their course; but there was one hope left, and a dark crimson flooded Julie Carbonnet's face, vanishing instantly and leaving it deathly white.

"Then for my sake, Paul—for I love you."

He started and clutched the chair upon which he was leaning, with a nervous grasp. For a moment not a sound could be heard save the beating of their hearts; then in a voice that sounded cold and hard he said, "Julie, for the love of God leave me!"

Slowly she arose from her knees and moved toward the door, only to turn with a cry of alarm as the prisoner, whose strength had given way beneath the trying ordeal, fell senseless upon the stony floor. She raised his head, and wetting her handkerchief in the miserable

stone pitcher which the cell afforded, bathed the cold white face and rubbed the icy hands. The door opened, and the guard to whom Julie had given the bribe entered and gruffly announced that the time was up.

"The prisoner is ill, man; surely they make provision for the sick in this terrible place!"

"We'll attend to him all right. A little faint, that's all. He's subject to them; he'd make a better inmate for the hospital than the cell. Come, girl, your time is up. You've been here twenty minutes already, and that's ten more than we usually allow visitors."

"He is coming to now; see that he is well cared for, man, and you shall be rewarded," and she hurried from the cell.

The moon had arisen clear and pale in the heavens since her entrance, but its white rays failed to disclose to her tear-dimmed eyes the form of the actor, St. John, standing upon the opposite curbing as she emerged from the gate. Filled with terror at the lateness of the hour, she hurried blindly along, taking the right route by instinct rather than intent. At last, faint and exhausted, she reached the Rue St. Denis, and gained access to her uncle's house through the same means by which she had left it. Not until she was safe within its walls did the man who had followed but a few yards behind her all the way, turn and retrace his steps toward the city.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MADEMOISELLE LANNES.

REPOSING amidst gorgeous silken cushions, and surrounded by a profusion of rare and costly flowers whose delightful odors scented the richly furnished apartment, Mademoiselle Blanche Lannes lay and idled away that tiresome hour after lunch, heartily wishing, as with half-closed, languid eyes she perused a violet-scented missive, that there were no such things as mankind and sentiment in the world. She had been pestered to death of late with such effusions, and was tired of it all. What was the world coming to if these were specimens of its men? With a look of disgust she cast the note aside, and selected another from the little heap of varied tints and perfumes which had accompanied the flowers, musing aloud as she read.

"Little Mortier again—dear, dear! This time he begs a lock of my hair, and the preposterous favor of a smile at the next performance. Foolish, lovesick boy! He should be learning his primer at his mamma's knee, rather than spending his time at such folly.

What has old Mauprat to say? I wonder. 'Cupid's arrow has left a wound which will not heal'—would to heaven the blind boy would stab him once and for all! What does the lovesick fool think Blanche Lannes cares for his money or his love! Ah! this one savors at least of common sense. From an old gentleman whose son has evidently been overstepping the bounds of prudence. Will I kindly refrain from accepting any more flowers, as his eldest son has crippled the family bank account, and things are beginning to look rather dubious at home. Ha, ha! I shall send out circulars to that effect, my dear man. Here, Marie, burn this rubbish, and carry away all the flowers except the violets; the perfume is stifling," she added as a servant entered with a card. "Then when you have accomplished that, bid the gentleman enter."

"Ah, St. John, old boy, we understand each other," she said to herself, and with a peculiar smile she settled herself a trifle more gracefully amidst the scented cushions, and awaited the entrance of the actor. He came in hurriedly, and, without stopping to remove the Inverness cloak he wore, seated himself opposite the singer with the rather indefinite observation, "Well?"

"Your letter was rather vague, St. John."

"I intended it should be."

"Oh, indeed! Then I am to enter into the matter blindfolded, acting as a sort of catspaw, eh?"

"That is it; you are clever at guessing, Blanche. However, we will not beat about the bush; I have come for your answer."

"And if I refuse?" with a sarcastic shrug of the shapely shoulders.

"Then I shall get along without you. Your coöperation would merely facilitate matters, that's all. However, I do not think you will refuse. Revenge is far too sweet to woman to admit of that."

"You are decidedly frank, my dear St. John; but, oh well, if the public sees fit to ferret out Blanche Lannes' secrets, it would be poor policy to sham innocence. Yes, indeed, revenge is sweet, and I have waited long for mine."

"Then you acquiesce?"

"I have not said so."

"Oh, if it gives you pleasure to waste words and valuable time by playing at cross purposes, why, do so. I see you are in one of your moods, Blanche."

She did not reply to this impatient outburst, but remained with downcast eyes, seemingly absorbed in thought. One beautifully curved arm, from which the flowing Japanese sleeve of her gown had fallen back, lay stretched

upon the low inlaid table beside her, the fingers idly playing with the violet petals; the other was thrown carelessly above her head, its snowy whiteness forming a vivid contrast to the raven locks. The piquante face was without color save for the bright crimson of the lips and the jetty blackness of the long sweeping lashes and the slightly arched brows.

The actor watched her intently, and though his gaze took in every detail of the striking picture, from the pale, creamy tint of the gown to the delicate curve of the slender ankle, his face betrayed no sign of what was passing in his mind. He was unusually pale, and an impatient expression lurked about his eyes, which were heavy and darkly circled, denoting a lack of sleep. Every movement of the hands betrayed annoyance and unrest, as they folded and unfolded a tiny slip of paper. Lionel St. John's face was decidedly a handsome one, yet strangely lacking in that quality which writers are wont to term soul. Smoothly shaven like all of his profession, with thin, well curved lips, deep blue eyes, and hair just dark enough to be beyond the blond limit, he was a typical specimen of the modern young Englishman.

After a rather prolonged meditation, Mlle. Lannes raised her eyes to his face, and observed abruptly, "I suppose I am not to ask how you

intend to dispose of the girl, once she is in your hands?"

"That surely cannot interest you. Your part of the bargain is at an end as soon as she is in France, and beneath your roof."

"Very well, St. John, I have thought it over and have decided that the end justifies the means. Go to my desk there and get me pen and paper; we will begin without delay. Blanche Lannes is a Frenchwoman and forgets neither slight nor injury. You have secured all information as to her whereabouts, I see. Ballarat Station! Outlandish enough, I must say. Why didn't the fool go to Hong Kong for a wife, and be done with it!" She smiled sneeringly as she dipped a pen in the ink set before her, and proceeded to copy the address from a card which the actor produced.

"Yes, I have not been idle. Use your own judgment about the letter, Blanche, but say nothing that might lead her to suspect all was not right."

A dull flush suffused Mlle. Lannes' pale face, and the little white teeth played nervously with the nether lip. She wrote steadily on in silence for several moments, and then handed the letter to the actor for perusal. The latter read it slowly through, then placed it in an envelope, and arose to go. "Cleverly done," he said; "I shall call again shortly, and meanwhile, good day."

Mlle. Lannes leaned her elbows upon the little table, and resting her chin upon her palms, smiled after his retreating figure. "A strange fellow," she murmured. Then she arose and followed him to the door.

St. John turned as he felt the light touch upon his arm, and the blood mounted to his face as his eyes met hers. Mlle. Lannes' dark orbs had a peculiar faculty of looking through one. "You are a fool, St. John," she said.

He made no answer. Perhaps in his inmost soul he acknowledged the truth of her assertion and could utter no conscientious defence; perhaps the abrupt nature of the accusation deprived him of speech for a moment. Man is quite reconciled to the thought that he is playing a fool's part, provided that thought has originated in, and has gotten no farther than, the pent-house of his own brain; but coming from a second person it assumes quite a different aspect—it generally floors him.

A strange, lurid light had crept into the little actress' eyes, and her small, white face assumed a hard, drawn look as she continued:

"I repeat it, St. John, you are a fool! Bah! cast it behind you. Trample it beneath your feet as you would a rat or snake! If you had been a woman, it would have turned to hatred long ere this; but being what you are, you must possess all the lamentable traits of your

kind. What poor, sickly fools men can make of themselves, and all for naught. They stand upon a par with fickle-minded infants, always craving for that which is beyond their reach; and yours, St. John, is invariably the type that makes the sorriest dupe of all; the careless, heartless type, the man of the world who has hitherto held the name of woman in no higher respect that he has that of his horse or dog, who has looked upon her as a creature far inferior to man, a creature of flesh and blood, yet lacking soul, sense and emotions. Ay, yours is invariably the class of men who in the end succumb to woman's power. You are ready to crawl like a driveling slave at her feet, if she but vouchsafe you a word or smile. You cringe and fawn as no sober, God-fearing man would, though he had from childhood been taught to respect all women as he would respect his mother. Love and respect grow with him and are identical; he loves soberly yet no less sincerely. With you it is different. Pure love has heretofore been to you an unknown quantity, and like a little child who has suddenly been deluged with sweetmeats, you are ready to fall upon your knees and worship the source. You are temperate in nothing; never stop to consider or reason with your soul, but plunge blindly in, oblivious to the fact that in certain currents man seldom lands upon his feet."

"You have hounded the fox from his den, Blanche, but have not yet brought him to bay. I suppose I am to take this outburst of yours as a dissertation upon men in general and upon myself in particular, for, lacking the feminine art which protects those of your own sex, I cannot, in consequence, feign ignorance of its import."

"Then do as I have done. Acknowledge yourself a fool, and learn to hate the object of your hopeless passion as I have learned to hate mine. Despise her, St. John. Do not stand so degraded in your own estimation as to be enamored of a woman who would seek out a married man, a murderer in his cell——"

"Stop! not another word! It has ever been the curse of you women to ferret out the weaknesses of others of your sex; you are ever ready to fling the first stone, hurl the first mud at another's name. God saw fit to furnish you with weaker frames than your brothers, but He made up for the deficiency by giving you the eyes of basilisks and the tongues of scorpions. You smile in each other's faces and kiss each other's lips, while all the while there is a rancorous vein within you that spits venom behind each other's backs. There is a little passage in the bible, the eighth chapter of Saint John, I believe, which begins, 'He who is without sin,' etc.; hunt it up, read it, con it over,

and then teach it to your sister women. There would be less evil in the world, less sorrow, less suffering, if we all abided by it. Good-bye. Perhaps I had better leave you this letter to post. In view of the fact that we are all unreliable, faltering creatures, it is the best plan to burn our bridges behind us, then there can be no hesitation or turning back. You see I can rely more upon your stability of purpose than I can upon my own."

Then he went away, and Mlle. Lannes returned to her couch to soliloquize, half in anger, half in contempt, over the logic of obstinate mankind. "O, how I hate the girl—and this other one in Australia! I hate them both, but I hate Bourrienne more. I hate him, I hate him, I hate him!" and Blanche Lannes buried her head in the cushions and burst into an agony of tears.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN A FOREIGN LAND A STRANGER.

DAZED and bewildered, Mary Bourrienne stepped from the train at the Southern Station and gazed doubtfully about her. "What if I should be so unfortunate as to miss her in this awful crowd?" she thought, looking eagerly and scrutinizingly at the face of each passerby.

"Madame de Bourrienne, I presume," said a sweet voice behind her, and Mary, turning in response to a light touch upon her arm, beheld a pair of liquid dark eyes gazing into her own.

"You are Mlle. Lannes? Thank Heaven! I feared we should miss each other. Tell me—my husband—is he better?"

"Yes, he is better, Madame de Bourrienne; come, my carriage is waiting at the end of the platform. Strange, I was not at all afraid of missing you in the crowd. You see, my dear, I had so pictured you in my imagination, that I felt I should know you by instinct when we met; and so I did." So saying Mlle. Lannes took Mary's arm and led the way, glancing at the latter's profile from time to time with a puzzled expression about her penciled brows.

Hardly satisfied with the brief reply to her anxious query about her husband, Mary was upon the point of begging for a more definite answer; but fearing to seem selfish or impatient in the handsome stranger's eyes, she resolved to wait until they reached the carriage. There, however, her intention was speedily handicapped by Mademoiselle herself, who, when once seated in the equipage, kept up such an incessant flow of "small talk" that they had almost reached their destination before Mary found an opportunity to give utterance to the words that trembled upon her lips.

"You said in your letter, Mlle. Lannes, that he was ill; pray tell me where he is that I may go to him at once."

"Set your mind at rest, my dear," replied the actress as they entered her apartments. "He is all right for the present, and I shall take you to him as soon as you have rested. You look worried and fatigued, and must have some refreshment before we talk. Let the maid take your things; there, now you look more comfortable. Will you have sherry or Pontet?"

"Neither, thank you; wine always makes my head ache. A cup of tea, if you please."

As Mlle. Lannes turned aside to give the order, there was a suspicious twitching about the corners of her mouth, but so well did she

hide it with one of her dazzling smiles as she turned again to her guest, that not even the most scrutinizing could have detected it. In a few moments a delicious repast was set before them, of which Mary partook but sparingly; for despite her hostess' light-hearted manner, and her assertions to the contrary, she feared that all was not right, that something serious had befallen Paul; and her heart beat quickly with anxiety and dread. Was the woman before her trying to shield something by this light and flippant manner, or was it just her natural high-spirited way? Why did she evade answering her queries in regard to Paul? She longed to jump up from the table and demand a definite answer from her, but quietly refrained as she saw that Mlle. Lannes had almost finished her dainty repast. The latter skillfully rolled a cigarette and passed it smilingly to her guest, only to meet with a surprised look from the blue eyes and a rather emphatic refusal.

"Too soon after eating, eh? It's strange, my dear Madame de Bourrienne, how tastes differ. Now I like mine immediately after lunch. However, we will put them by for the present; and now, if you feel sufficiently rested after your long journey, we will sit here in this cozy window corner and talk. Have you never been in Paris before, my dear?" and Mlle.

Lannes settled herself gracefully upon a rose-colored divan opposite her guest.

"No, this is my first visit to France."

"Oh, indeed! Then you will enjoy a glimpse of our Parisian life. It will be a pleasant novelty in your case."

Some rather unpleasant thoughts were passing through the actress' mind as she studied the face before her, and it would have been difficult to read the expression in the dark, dreamy eyes. She had gone to the station in the morning expecting to behold some shy, awkward and ungainly girl, whose every movement and utterance would savor of the Australian bush, a place of which Mlle. Lannes had often heard, but of which she had formed, like most of her class, a rather inaccurate and erroneous impression. What was her surprise, then, upon beholding this quiet, lady-like girl, with her sweet, refined features and halo of gold-colored hair. Mlle. Lannes was not quite pleased.

"Madame de Bourrienne," she said after a few moments' silence, "I have deceived you, insomuch as I made light in my letter to you of the circumstances that required your presence in Paris. Your husband is not slightly ill, as I stated, but in dire trouble. It seems he has been accused of some misdemeanor against the laws of his country, and is at pre-

sent in custody at the prison of La Roquette here in Paris."

"In prison! My husband! Surely you are jesting, Mlle. Lannes."

"It would be a sorry theme for jest, my dear. We French people are decidedly matter-of-fact, as the English would put it, although we have the name of being quite the reverse. No, I do not jest. I have told you the truth, but pray, my dear, do not grow so pale, or I shall regret my candor and wish my words unsaid."

"You say he has been accused of violating the laws of his country, Mlle. Lannes; pray tell me of what he is accused," and Mary endeavored to assume a calm and unmoved manner, although her blood was growing cold with fear.

Mlle. Lannes was silent and seemed to be laboring under some great mental difficulty. She knew best how to add fuel to the fires of alarm that were smouldering in the breast of the girl before her, and meant to use that knowledge to her own fiendish satisfaction.

"You are silent, Mademoiselle; is the affair then so serious that you fear to tell me?"

The actress raised a dainty lace handkerchief to her eyes and prepared to wipe away a few crocodile tears, forced through her black

lashes by a series of squinting and winking manœuvres at which Mademoiselle was an adept. Trembling with suspense and dread, Mary arose and went to her side. "You are alarmed and solicitous upon my behalf, Mlle. Lannes; the affair is more serious than you at first led me to believe," she said, taking the singer's hand. "Do not weep, but tell me quickly; it would be kinder than keeping me in suspense."

"You will faint, and then I shall be upset for my performance to-night. Pray do not force me to tell you, Madame de Bourrienne."

Nervous and homesick, and filled with a dread of she knew not what, Mary dropped the actress' hand and began to cry, sobbing through her tears that Paul was dead, and Mademoiselle would not tell her. Deciding that she had carried the farce far enough, Mlle. Lannes fixed her eyes scrutinizingly upon the girl's face, in order to behold the full effect of her words, and then named the crime of which Bourrienne stood accused. She might have found some gentler, kinder way to inform the frightened, lonely girl of the affliction that had befallen her, but Mlle. Lannes wasted little sentiment upon those whom she chose to regard as her enemies. Why should not this girl suffer as she had suffered—long ago? She was no better, no

wiser, not half so beautiful, and evidently did not possess any more backbone than a mollusc; and Mademoiselle's lips curled in disdain as she beheld the agony through which the girl was passing, and listened to her passionate weeping. She concealed these sentiments, however, beneath a mask of womanly sympathy, and offered all manner of sweet condolences in her pretty broken English. She begged Madame de Bourrienne to take a little wine and then go to bed; she would be calmer and more reasonable in the morning.

All that night, Mary lay awake upon her strange bed in one of Mlle. Lannes' pretty chambers, weeping and praying for Paul, and longing for the morrow to come in order that she might find out the prison where he was incarcerated, and tell the prison authorities just what she thought of their unexampled impudence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADAME DE BOURRIENNE FINDS A CHAMPION.

In the morning Mademoiselle herself carried Mary her chocolate as she lay in bed, pale and worn out by her restless night. Had Madame slept well, and did she not feel much more at ease after her night's rest? she asked. Then, having smoothed the pillows and brushed the fair hair back from Mary's hot forehead, she sat down upon the side of the bed, looking like some beautiful fancy picture, Mary thought, in her soft, loosely flowing gown with its jabot of antique lace.

"Yes, I feel better, Mlle. Lannes; so much so that, as soon as I have dressed, I think I shall be able to visit this place, this prison of which you spoke, and see my husband. I should have gone last night, instead of delaying to mourn in selfishness over my own misfortune."

"Nonsense, my dear Madame; you were not selfish by any means, What woman would not be greatly shocked over such a calamity? But pray do not let any wild schemes enter your head about visiting La Roquette.

Here in France, the laws as regards alleged criminals are of the strictest order. You could go to La Roquette, perhaps be admitted to the inner yard, but you would be allowed no further. The guards have strict orders to admit no one."

"But surely they would not deny a wife the privilege of seeing her husband, especially when it is known that he will be proven innocent."

"Listen, Madame de Bourrienne, and I will tell you what we will do. Nothing definite is known about your husband's case, nor will there be before a few weeks at the least. He is in prison, and access to him is out of the question; I have found that out, for as I wrote you, I am a very old and dear friend, and wished most anxiously to proffer condolence for such a great misfortune—and misunderstanding, I am sure; but the prison officials were obdurate, and bade me, not very politely either, to wait until the trial was over. This, I at length concluded, was the wiser thing to do, and so must you, Madame, if you wish to avoid trouble and annoyance. You shall be my guest here in Paris until your husband is released, and although my home is not, perhaps, as grand a one as Madame de Bourrienne has been used to, I hope she will overlook its deficiencies and learn to adapt herself to her

surroundings," and Mademoiselle's eyelids drooped in becoming self-depreciation.

Mary looked up in surprise through her tears. She thought of the little home in Australia, and then compared her own small bedroom with its plain white bed and muslin curtains, its white-pine dresser, and carpet of figured matting, with Mademoiselle's luxurious chamber, and she half smiled at the latter's modesty. "Your home, Mlle. Lannes, is much more grand and beautiful than anything I have ever been used to," she said, "and it is very kind on your part to offer me such hospitality. I fear that in my trouble and excitement I have neglected to show my appreciation, but you must know that I am grateful. But for you, perhaps I should never have known of this frightful affair; but for you I might perhaps be here among strangers, among a people who speak another tongue than my own, and you, Mademoiselle, can picture such a sad and desolate situation. Believe me, I am deeply grateful, and when Paul, my husband, is free, when all this dreadful misunderstanding is cleared away, then he will thank you as I cannot do for your kindness to an utter stranger. You have a good heart, Mademoiselle."

"Nonsense; do not talk of gratitude; what I do I am doing out of regard for Monsieur, your husband; but come, we will let such sen-

timents rest. When you have dressed we will have breakfast, and then if you like we will drive for an hour or so before lunch. You will like our Paris, I can assure you. This evening I shall have a friend at dinner, one of your countrymen; and yet not your countryman either, for he is an Englishman; but he speaks your language, so it amounts to the same thing, and he speaks it *sans* the awful blunders in person and tense that we French are noted for," and Mlle. Lannes showed all her white teeth in a bewitching smile.

"Mademoiselle," ventured Mary, as the former moved toward the door, "are there no English newspapers in Paris? I do not understand French, but I should like to read what is said about my husband."

"None that I know of, but St. John will know. He is a very wise man, Madame, in his own valued estimation, at least—a veritable information bureau as concerns his own country. You must like him for my sake, Madame de Bourrienne, and I am sure that later you will like him for his own."

And when the actress' merry chatter had died away, and Mary was once more alone, a feeling of gladness entered her heart at the thought of meeting one whose tongue would not jar strangely upon her ears, and to whom she might speak as to an acquaintance and

not a stranger. She would make a friend of this St. John, would tell him all her fears and hopes, and would solicit his aid in seeking out Paul and having this horrifying matter settled at once. Yes, she would wait and obtain his advice as to what she had better do; it would be wiser, as Mlle. Lannes had said, than to rush blindly forward, with neither aid nor influence to back her cause. He was a man, and an Englishman at that, and would know at once what to do. Women were poor creatures at the best in a case of this kind.

But upon that evening, contrary to Mademoiselle's statement, St. John did not put in an appearance at dinner; he was no doubt unavoidably detained, she said, and they need not wait for him. It was probable that he would arrive later; so after dinner Madame de Bourrienne might amuse herself as she saw fit, while she, Mademoiselle, retired to write some letters which she had unfortunately neglected that day. "I do not go to my theatre tonight, Madame, so if you should become lonesome or wish to speak to me, come to my little study off the dining-room. I shall be there for the next hour or so. Now as to how you will employ your time. There are plenty of books scattered about my room, all new editions, too; but I forget, you do not read French. Well then, the piano is at your dis-

posal; there are several pretty little scores upon the rack. I shall sing for you by and by, Madame; meantime, amuse yourself, and do not be down-hearted or lonesome," and with another of her fascinating smiles, Mademoiselle withdrew.

Mary wandered aimlessly about the pretty parlors, stopping now and then to study a dainty sketch upon the wall, or to glance over the photographs of theatrical celebrities with which the tables and mantel were strewn. Then she sat down at the piano and played "Home, Sweet Home" with three fingers of one hand—Paul had taught it her upon the grand piano in the hotel ball-room at Rockhampton. That was the extent of her repertoire, and she played it through several times. Then even that flagged. She looked over the music upon the piano, but each sheet bore a French or Italian name, and she laid them aside with a little sigh of loneliness, and walked to the window and looked around upon the scene without.

Everything was strange and unfamiliar. She had nothing in common with this great, bustling city. All seemed cold, unfathomable and dreary. If those crowds of hurrying people down below but spoke her own tongue, it would have been quite different, at least it would have seemed different; but foreigners,

all foreigners—to Mary it seemed that they must belong to another world of creatures; creatures whose thoughts, conceptions and habits must be widely different from her own. Oh, was anyone ever so lonely as she? she wondered, gazing up at the twinkling stars, and at the moon which seemed to look palely and coldly down upon this land of France, no longer deeply red as she had seen it rise above the pine-trees far away in the little settlement. She fancied she could discern upon its grayish surface the gigantic man of her childish fears, the dread creature who held the uprooted tree by the strength of his single arm, in the legend old; and she thought of her mother, and of the infant days when she had leaned against her knee and had traced weird, fairy figures in the clouds and stars. Those days had fled as with Atalanta's speed; all was changed and gone. She was a woman now, with a woman's heart, a woman's dreams, and a woman's cares and tribulations. All was not sunshine in life, as she had at one time supposed. There was sorrow to be taken with its pleasure, bitter with its sweet; yes, she was a woman, *but more than woman's strength must be hers.*

The evening dragged on, dull and gloomy. Mlle. Lannes was still busy over her letters; she had evidently selected that evening of all others to respond to a six months' collection

of business communications and love epistles. Twice Mary had stolen quietly to the door and looked in upon her. She would have liked to enter and speak to her, for even Mademoiselle's chattering, indifferent English was preferable to such utter loneliness; but ever shy and backward among strangers, she had feared to intrude, and had crept quietly away again. Once a wild idea had entered her head, to slip out into the night, and seek out this horrible place, this La Roquette, as it was called, and beg upon her knees for just one word with her husband. What if this woman, out of a mistaken idea of kindness, was keeping something from her? What if Paul had been already tried and—but no, she would not let such thoughts possess her. Women's brains were ever teeming with all manner of horrible and unlikely fancies. She would wait for Mademoiselle's friend, this Mr. St. John; if there was really anything serious, and she scoffed at the idea, he would tell her. Men were less scrupulous than women.

The evening had worn away and ten o'clock had come. The actress had called out once or twice to ask if she wished to retire, but Mary had answered in the negative; she could not let another night pass without learning something definite about this affair, be it for good or evil. The crowd upon the street below

was gradually thinning out, and fewer carriages were passing; it was the time when those who kept nightly revels were breathing the hot, unhealthful air of some overheated theatre or concert hall, or were whirling away the hours in some crowded ball-room. Street traffic for the time had ceased.

Mlle. Lannes was also growing impatient. She bit her lips and watched the clock nervously as the minutes passed. Would the fool turn niggard at the last minute? When was a hot-headed man to be trusted?

Mary arose from the window and moved quietly to the dining-room door, and stood there for a moment irresolute. Her own room was beyond, at the extreme end of the suite, and there she had left her outer garments that morning. To reach it she would have to pass Mademoiselle's room, and the latter would immediately surmise her intention and would try and persuade her to abandon it. That would mean valuable time lost. Turning back she lifted a heavy cloak of the singer's, which lay over the back of a chair, and placed it about her shoulders; then carefully opening the door she looked out. Mademoiselle's apartments were among the most select in the hostelry, being entirely separated from the neighboring suites, and having a private entrance and stairway leading to the public hall below. Closing

the door softly behind her, Mary stole along the hall and down the stairs, her footsteps making no sound upon the soft red velvet carpet. When halfway to the hall below, she paused, startled for a moment. A gentleman was standing beneath the drop-light, deeply absorbed in the perusal of a newspaper, and had not noticed her approach. So motionless he stood that it seemed to Mary that he might have fallen asleep over the page upon which his eyes were bent. He was in evening dress, the light from the chandelier falling full upon the white of his linen, and making a mirror-like lustre upon the silk hat he wore. Once she had seen Paul dressed like that—it was when they were at Melbourne, and she remembered how handsome she thought he looked. This man was also handsome.

Wrapping the cloak more closely about her, Mary continued down the stairs to the hall. The man beneath the chandelier lifted his hat and stepped aside, and she passed on to the outer door, and thence to the street. Where she was going, which way to turn, she knew not. She would make a desperate effort, and perhaps success would repay her in the end. She turned to the right and continued along that side of the Place Vendôme upon which the hotel stood. If worst came to the worst, she could at least find her way back. Two women

were approaching, and forgetting for a moment that she was in the midst of a foreign-speaking race, Mary stopped and enquired the way; but they exchanged puzzled glances with each other, shook their heads, and murmuring something in French, passed on. Ah, she was indeed handicapped, and the tears again arose to her eyes as she walked slowly on.

Ere she had gone many paces further, she was conscious that somebody had approached from behind and had stopped beside her. She turned with a nervous start and looked in his face. It was the man she had passed in the hall a few moments before.

"Mlle. Lannes has delegated me to bring Madame de Bourrienne back," he said.

Mary's heart gave a glad bound. Never before had her own language sounded so musical in her ears. "Then you are Mr. St. John," she said, and prompted by the feeling of friendship she had held toward him since the actress had told her that he was an Englishman, and by the old-fashioned courtesy that she had learned from her father and his unconventional associates, she extended her hand to the actor. Social customs might at least in this case be set aside, she thought. But either the action was unnoticed upon his part or was purposely overlooked, for having bowed in acknowledgment of her query, he half turned back in the

direction whence he had come, and waited for her to join him. On the way he addressed several commonplace remarks to her, but there seemed to be a certain constraint in his manner, and Mary feared that it was going to be a more difficult task than she had imagined to make a friend and confidant of this man. Had he heard her story, she wondered, or did he consider her a friend of Mademoiselle?

When they reached the house, the latter rated Mary familiarly for running away, as she called it, when people who had lived in Paris all their lives had been known to go astray in its streets. "You must have patience, dear," she said, and kissed her cheek.

Had she been long in Paris, St. John asked, or was she there for a brief stay? And what did she think of the French metropolis? It was not to be compared to their English cities, was it? Here Mademoiselle, ever an adept in repartee, strenuously demurred; and then ensued one of those time-honored disputes between parties of opposite nations, in which each upholds his end of the controversy as if he really believed what he uttered. Mary did not join in the foolish argument other than to smile at the actress' candidly voiced opinion of the whole English-speaking race, or to nod her approval when St. John threw a winning card. She noticed that, despite the latter's

light-hearted manner, his face was strangely pale, and she wondered if he was ill or worried in any way. Mademoiselle noticed it also, and there was just the slightest suspicion of a sneer about her lips.

As the conversation began to lag, she drew Mary down beside her upon a dainty settle, and, taking her hand, and stroking it gently as she talked, she told St. John her story. The blood came and went in Mary's cheeks, and she wished that Mademoiselle had chosen a time when she, herself, was not present. She noticed the well-feigned start with which the actor greeted her husband's name, and a feeling of indignation against the government of France filled her breast. This man, as well as thousands of others, no doubt, had heard his story and was surprised that she was Paul de Bourrienne's wife. Every person in Paris was no doubt familiar with the tale; it had been heralded broadcast, and all by some wretched mistake. Perhaps some people believed it even! and the hot blood arose in anger to her face at the thought.

St. John was very sorry that such a misunderstanding had arisen, one never knew what to expect in this world; but she must not let herself worry too much about it. All would come out right in the end. He advised her to remain quietly at Mlle. Lannes' apartments;

meanwhile, with her permission, he would champion her cause and see what could be done. Soon after, he bade them good night and went away. He would call again upon the following day, he said.

That week was an anxious one for Mary. She watched each day for the actor's coming, and listened with eager ears to his words of encouragement and hope. He had become a brother to her, and at times she wondered what she would have done had she not this friend to rely upon. It was St. John who scoured the city of Paris for English newspapers—and found none; it was St. John who was ever by to place a settle at her feet or a cushion at her back; St. John who was her champion—and never was woman more grateful.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANCESCA OF RIMINI.

MARY was alone, Mlle. Lannes having gone to her theatre. The night was warm, and she had turned the gas low, and had drawn a chair to the open window, there to sit and brood over her unhappy lot. There is a certain sweetness in solitude, a peculiar, subtle charm for the weary-hearted; and a quiet sense of relief stole over Mary's perturbed spirit as she rested there in the shadow, holding communion with her sorrowful thoughts, and thankful that, for a time at least, she was spared the agonizing necessity of engaging in the light and frivolous conversations with which Mlle. Lannes always sought to beguile the time.

The actress' parlors presented a strangely weird and solemn appearance upon that August night. A cluster of arc-lights in the square threw a white radiance upon the further wall, serving to partially illuminate the bay-window where Mary sat, but casting the remainder of the room into deeper gloom, save where light-colored objects among the costly furnishings gleamed white from the dusky shadows. A

marble bust of Wagner stood out in bold relief; the ivory of the piano keys seemed to have derived an added lustre from some unknown source; the heavy, wrought chains of the portières were changed into bands of silvery lustre, reflecting at irregular intervals the uncertain rays from the incandescent; in an adjoining room a cheval mirror gleamed tall and white, like some pale ghostly shape; the globes about the tiny, flickering gas flames cast dark circular shadows upon the dingy white of the ceiling. The gloom was oppressive.

Mary turned from the room, and, resting her head against the side of the window-frame, gazed down upon the broad square below, alive with the noise and bustle of a Parisian night. Carriages were passing to and fro; people jostled one another in order to avoid the hurrying vehicles; fashionably dressed men and women strolled along the boulevards, their voices echoing through the night air; merry wheeling parties of boys and girls whirled past, their light laughs coming back through the darkness long after they had passed from sight. Everyone seemed to be happy and free from care to the silent on-looker. Her mind had been in a woeful state of unrest of late, and had daylight illumined the features now concealed in shadow, it would

have discovered dark circles beneath the heavy eyes, and traces of unshed tears in their depths. The wild and passionate grief which had seized her upon learning the nature of the crime of which her husband stood accused had gradually subsided, giving place to a quieter, gentler, more womanly sorrow, which brought in its wake strength and forbearance, and a determination, buoyed up by a firm belief in his innocence, to trust in God for his welfare and release.

Oh, that Paul had never returned to France, that they were once more happy and free from trouble in the quiet little home in Australia, far from this restless hive of humanity; but that would all come in time, and she must be patient and wait. Worry and complaint would avail her nothing. He would be tried, of course; the horrifying mistake would be explained; then would come the release, and she smiled as she pictured his surprise and pleasure at finding her in Paris, waiting to welcome him, instead of far away in Australia. Then she would tell him just how it had come to pass, as she sat, perhaps, in that very room, with Paul's arm about her, and her head against his breast.

Incidentally her thoughts turned upon the actor, St. John. How kind he had been to her during their short acquaintance; how at-

tentive; how sympathetic in her sorrow; how brotherly in his disinterested endeavors to relieve her mental suffering. What dreary days those would have been had she not had such a friend to counsel and console her. She would tell Paul all about it, and he and the actor would become friends for life, for Paul's was a nature that never forgot a kindness; and Mlle. Lannes, too, though frivolous and thoughtless in manner, and little adapted to sympathize with such feelings as hers, was kind at heart and a friend worth having. What a happy reunion it would be! Then they would go back to Australia, to be at peace once more. They would arrange to reach the settlement just as twilight was falling, and she would steal silently in and blindfold her father while he was moving about the little kitchen, awkwardly preparing his evening meal. Perhaps Mlle. Lannes and Mr. St. John would accompany them home on a visit; and how they would enjoy Australian life, and what pleasure Paul and she would derive from showing them about the settlement. She felt almost sure that the actor had never seen a flamingo, and that Mlle. Lannes would scream with terror at the sight of a laughing-jackass.

There is some occult sense within us, apart from hearing, sight or touch, which lends a peculiar, instinctive power to the brain, and en-

ables us to know, without the aid of outward forces, when another presence than our own is near. Mary had turned her eyes for the last half-hour upon the square, watching the ever-increasing tide of humanity, yet dreaming dreams in nowise connected with its ceaseless flow; but as the deafening noise occasioned by some lumbering vehicle on the street gradually died away, she turned with a start, conscious that someone had entered the room. In the pale half-light, St. John, the actor, stood before her.

"I rang twice, Madame de Bourrienne, but so rapt were you in revery that you did not hear me," he said.

With a smile of welcome, Mary arose to turn on the lights, but the actor stayed her hand. "Do not trouble for my sake, Madame; I see you prefer this pleasant, dreamy shadow, and in that respect our tastes coincide. The night is far to beautiful to be slighted for such a commonplace commodity as gaslight."

He seated himself comfortably in a lounging chair before her, the bright light from the street striking full upon his features. Mary saw that he was again in evening dress, and judged from the cloak that was thrown carelessly about his shoulders that he had but just come from the theatre. A brief explanation as to Mlle. Lannes' absence had arisen to

her lips, but an unwonted taciturnity in the actor's manner caused her to hesitate. She would wait for him to open the conversation. Had Mary been a city-bred girl, a certain sense of propriety would have led her to avoid a *tête à tête* such as the present one, but living as she had from childhood, in a home where simplicity reigned supreme, no thought of impropriety entered the girl's mind.

For many minutes the actor sat in silence, his head resting against the cushioned chair-back, the eyes half closed as if in thought; then, without changing his position or glancing in her direction, he asked in a quiet tone: "Madame de Bourrienne, if some one did you a gross, an unpardonable injury, an injury that wrecked your whole life and made the future seem a dreary, empty blank, and existence a hopeless torture, what would you do? Leave the matter to be decided by a higher power than yourself, or seek out an unholy revenge?"

She looked up inquiringly. "It depends a great deal upon the nature of the injury. We being but human, there are some things, of course, which we cannot forgive."

"Well, supposing a man—a friend of mine, we will say—were in love with a beautiful young girl, and that his whole heart and soul were wrapt up in her and in her alone; that he

loved her fervently, passionately, madly; that a smile from her lips were more to him than the kisses and caresses of any hundred other women; that he would willingly give up his life for her; sell his soul, do anything—"

He paused as if lost in a revery occasioned by his words, and a heavy frown settled upon his features as he continued:

"And supposing a—well, for the sake of explicitness we will say a man, though by the grace of the devil, he is lower than the brutes—a man, notwithstanding the fact that he had a beautiful young wife, stepped in and, with his cursed fascinations, lured this lovely girl on to destruction; what would you do in his, my friend's, place, Madame de Bourrienne?"

She hesitated before replying. She was trying to put herself in the place of the wronged man. She thought of Paul; supposing some woman had willfully fascinated him and had alienated his affections from herself, how should she feel toward that woman? Her answer was typically womanish: "I think I should kill him!"

"It would be a just fate, would it not, Madame? But what if death for the coward were already assured? What if to his other dastardly crime were added that of willful murder, and it were but a question of a few

weeks when he should be made to answer for his deeds upon the guillotine?"

Mary shuddered. She did not fancy the trend of the conversation. It was too weird, too ghoulish for that gloomy room. Little shivers crept through her flesh as she answered: "Then I should consider that justice had been meted out, that the highest penalty had been paid."

Again silence reigned, broken only by the hum of wires in the square as a car approached rapidly in the distance. Then the actor arose slowly and moved to the piano. Mary could scarcely see his hands glide over the keys as he broke into a lively fantasia. Even the music was weird. As short a time as she had known St. John, she had learned to understand his moods. Like many others, his personality was best revealed through the medium of music, and she had often of late amused Mlle. Lannes by her intuition in that line. When he played light, airy sketches from that lady's operas, Mary imagined that she detected a vein of sarcasm in his manner, though why, she could not tell; then on the contrary, when his selections were of the deeper, more classical sort, his mood was serious, thoughtful, indicating to her mind feelings of sadness and regret. To-night she was puzzled. His mood was enigmatical. St. John was

not a "good" player. He belonged rather to that class of musicians for whom quick perception and natural cleverness had supplied to a certain extent the lack of solid training. He could dash through a piece with more than ordinary ability, but depending more upon air than technique; still there was a subtle fascination in his touch, and an indescribable charm in his execution.

Music ever awakens a sad sensibility in even the most lighthearted; a feeling of homesickness and loneliness stole over Mary's spirits, and she longed to be back once more in the dear old home in the little colony. The strange conversation she had just held with the actor was forgotten; the thought of Paul was paramount in her mind. She was rudely awakened from her revery. The music ceased abruptly, and the actor, resting his elbow upon the rack, turned and faced her. His features could not be discerned, but there was a strange ring in his voice as he asked, "When a man willfully murders another, we call him a murderer, a homicide, do we not, Madame de Bourrienne?"

She started, for the sentiment was all but identical with her thoughts. She did not reply, and he continued: "And if the victim be his brother, we change the prefix, do we not, and call him—fratricide? What would

you think of a man who willfully murdered his brother, Madame de Bourrienne?"

"I should think him a creature devoid of all natural feeling, an inhuman wretch, unworthy the breath of life; but why choose such an unpleasant subject? Let us talk of something more agreeable. Tell me how Mlle. Lannes appears in her new opera; she wished very much for me to hear her this week, but of course I cannot go until this misunderstanding is settled and my husband is released."

He made some inarticulate rejoinder, and arising from the piano paced aimlessly up and down the long suite of apartments. Once Mary saw him stop before Mlle. Lannes' well-stocked sideboard in the dining-room beyond, which was dimly lighted, and hastily quaff off a glass of wine. His extreme restlessness annoyed her, and she was relieved when he at length resumed his seat in the window. His first words, however, caused her to look up in alarm.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, is it not so written, Madame de Bourrienne? Why do you start, do my little homilies annoy you?"

She had arisen and drawn back the heavy window draperies, allowing the light from the street to fall full upon his face. Her own was

as white as death. "I am neither blind nor stupid, Lionel St. John; your words have a meaning and are meant for me alone. Go on—I am listening."

"You would rather hear the story from my lips than from those of a stranger?" he asked in the same impassive, unmoved voice.

A frightened little cry answered him. "Then there is something!" she cried. "Go on, go on; why do you persist in torturing me? You have some horror to disclose! I know it—I feel it! The moment you entered the room I saw that all was not well, yet I fought against my suspicions, tried to down them, but to no purpose. Speak, I tell you, I am listening."

He hesitated a moment, as if deliberating how to begin; then as if resolved to clinch matters with one horrible blow, he raised his eyes to the white face before him, and said in the same icy voice, "Madame de Bourrienne, your husband has been condemned to death."

For a moment she stood stunned, motionless; then with a cry of agony flung herself at the actor's feet. "No, no, it is not so! For the love of God, say it is not so!"

He remained silent, his features as impassive and unmoved as those of a marble statue.

Slowly the terrified eyes were raised to his. "Go on—the story—I must know all."

"This will tell you the ghastly tale—I can-

not." He touched a spring in the wall, and a flood of electricity illumined the room; then leading Mary to a table, he spread a copy of an English newspaper before her. It was dated the fifteenth, the most noted day of the hearing. There it was in glaring black and white. The head-lines told the tale. Trembling and sobbing, she clung to the actor's arm as she tried to realize the astounding facts that the words revealed. "Self-confessed Fratricide Condemned to Die!" Fratricide! and that meant Paul, her husband, from whom she had parted one short month ago! and all these strange things had happened since! What a gruesome tale it was! Was she dreaming? Alas, no! it was there before her, all too true.

Slowly she raised her eyes from the paper and fixed them upon a spot in the carpet beyond, but she saw it not. She was back in Australia, wandering hand in hand with Paul through the sweetly scented forest; she was again beside the emu's nest, while he stood by and laughed at her solicitude for the tiny creatures' welfare; once again she stood beneath the cedars at the cross-roads and saw his lips frame the words, "I love you." A flood of sorrow rushed over her, and the tears gushed forth like rain.

The actor bent above her. "Madame de Bourrienne," he said, "do you know the story

of Francesca? If not I will tell it you. Dry those tears and listen.

"Long, long ago, in sunny Italy there lived a nobleman, Guido, Lord of Ravenna; a man endowed with an uncommonly generous portion of this world's goods, and possessing among his other treasures one which far exceeded, though not in Guido's estimation, those of riches, land and public favor—a beautiful daughter, a goddess in human form—Francesca. Beloved alike for beauty, talents and wit, she was besieged upon every side by impassioned suitors, all clamoring for her smiles and favors; and Guido, recking her value as far below that of his paintings and plate, which wild horses alone could drag from him; bestowed his lovely daughter, while yet a child, upon the wealthiest but most ill-favored of her suitors, Lanciotto, Lord of Rimini. Upon that nobleman's character and personality we will touch but lightly; suffice it to say that the delicate tastes, refined manner and loving disposition of the beautiful Italian girl were sorely wounded by contact with tastes and temperament wholly uncongenial to her own; suffice it to say that, after submitting patiently to tortures of both mind and body, always endeavoring to return good for evil, kindness for cruelty, and forgiveness for insult, womanhood and pride at length asserted their

sway, and Francesca, commended for the act by those who were sensible of her worth and loveliness, broke through the bonds that linked her to deformity and avarice, and fled to the arms and love of him whose soul was for her created—Paolo, a cavalier of Ravenna. And so cruelty and arrogance, cowardice and oppression were foiled by innocence and love, and the beautiful daughter of Guido of Ravenna can only stand as a monument of womanhood and purity in the eyes of all Italy to-day; for in rebelling against the cruelty and tyranny that surrounded her, she but conformed to the laws of God and nature, and in casting aside the world and infamy for love, she but responded to the dictates of her inmost soul."

Again the blue eyes were raised to his face, and with terrified scrutiny seemed to search his features. "Why do you tell me this?"

"Because I would have you bring pride and womanhood to your aid, and assume the rôle of Francesca. Dry those tears, girl, for like those of Adah, they are wasted upon villainy! Throw aside the chains that bind you to cowardice and infamy, and come where love awaits you!"

With one arm he encircled her form, and bent his head until his lips all but touched her icy ones. She drew back shuddering, her eyes fixed in horror upon the actor's face. Words

of sympathy and love fell in eloquence from his lips; sympathy so sweet to the heart of the afflicted. He had pleaded the cause of a Romeo; the role of Othello had often been his; and above all, he had pleaded a thousand times in imagination his own cause to the woman he loved better than life itself. Behind the pale, girlish features, with their crown of golden hair, he saw the calm, striking face of Julie Carbonnet; it was to her, for her, he pleaded.

A spell seemed falling about the girl as she listened, but with an effort of desperation she shook it off and faced him. "How dare you speak to me so! My husband is a criminal, a murderer, an unfortunate wretch, but he is not what your words imply, for heavy odds were against him, and the story of his wrongs expiates the deed. He is not a coward! If he were, he would have denied rather than have confessed his crime. It is you who display cowardice in talking to me thus. Even did not my marriage vows charge me to cling to him through misfortune and sorrow, my love alone would bid me do so!"

"Ay, Madame, love often survives the awful crash of circumstances, and stands ready to defend its object until death; but pride, more tenacious of life than that passion we call love, sometimes asserts its sway and crowds the

other out. Murderer! fratricide! a laudable combination! a worthy creature to cherish! But still blind love will cling to a corrupted thing. But what if to these two infamous titles we add another, another even more vile, more treacherous, more cowardly than the first—that of deserter! Madame de Bourienne, would you play the meek, the humble, the submissive rôle of a Josephine?"

She started, and a frightened cry came from her lips. "Are you man or devil that you can talk to me thus? How dare you make such statements!"

"I have spoken the truth, Madame; moreover, I can prove it."

"Do so then—you coward!"

The blood rushed in a torrent to his face, and his lips were drawn together in a thin, angry line. "I am ready. In another hour a woman will steal from her home and visit your husband in his cell, lured there by his deceit and villainy. At the expiration of that time I will conduct you to La Roquette, and you shall see for yourself." He turned away and, with his back to the room, stood gazing down upon the square.

Mary, white and trembling, arose and entered the further parlor. She must remain calm and cool; she must not allow herself to think; she must employ her mind in some

way until that hour was over, and then—. She seated herself at a table and began to count the tiny figures in the embroidered cloth, going back to begin anew when conscious of a miscount, as if some important question depended upon the foolish act; she tried to let her mind dwell upon vacancy; to shut out all thoughts of the glaring horror that seemed closing in around her.

A book of English poems lay upon the table, and opening it, her eyes rested mechanically upon two little lines. She read them again and again, she repeated them to herself.

> "Nor be by tempting words abused—
> Those tempting words were all to Sappho used."

She all but repeated them aloud, but she comprehended them not.

A clock in the square chimed the half-hour, and the actor turned from the window and placed a cloak about her shoulders. "Come," he said. She arose, but was obliged to cling to the table for support. St. John poured a glass of wine and watched her as she drank. In her face he read a mingling of despair and determination.

Avoiding the main stairway, he led her from the house by a side entrance. A carriage stood at the door, but she shook her head;

she would walk, she must keep in motion, or her thoughts would deprive her of reason. Through the now almost deserted by-streets they passed, exchanging no word, each occupied with his or her reflections.

When la Rue de la Roquette was reached, the actor led her beneath the shadow of the great archway of the prison gate. "We will remain here in the shadow. Do not speak or stir. I can assure you you will not have long to wait," he said in an undertone.

A mingling of sensations surged through her breast as she raised her white face and beheld the cold gray walls, but she tried to shut out all sense of emotion; she was there for a purpose. She almost smiled as she realized why she had come. What a vain, silly, suspicious fool she was! What an injustice she was doing to Paul to even harbor a doubt of his honor. No, she would sooner doubt her own love than Paul's integrity; and a look of scorn wreathed her features as she glanced at the man beside her.

In a few moments the heavy tread of the watchman could be heard within the prison yard. He advanced to the grating and looked up and down the street for a moment, and then passed on. Mary's eyes were still riveted upon the spot where he had stood, when a woman's form brushed hastily by her and

approached the gate. The actor's clasp tightened upon her arm, as if he feared that she would break loose and attack the cloaked figure. But Mary was too startled to move, and stood gazing in amazement at the, to her, unexpected apparition. The woman was speaking in English to the watchman; evidently he had not passed on as she had supposed.

"A valuable jewel this time, man. Bourrienne expects me to-night without fail; yesterday I was obliged to disappoint him."

A faint cry came from Mary's lips. The actor placed his arm about her swaying form and led her quickly away.

"Merciful God! what shall I do! what shall I do!" she cried.

He stooped and pressed his lips to the icy cheek. "Come where love awaits you," he whispered.

Behind them, Mlle. Lannes' rippling laugh rang out upon the still summer night.

When the actress' parlors were reached, St. John placed pen and paper upon the table before the fainting girl. "Write as I dictate," he said.

"Paul—put a dash, he has no name—A coward's fate is a coward's meed. I have—gone—with St. John. Sign—Mary Elginbrod."

Mechanically she obeyed. The pen trembled visibly as she placed it to the paper to sign the familiar name. The "Mary" was fairly legible; the first syllable of the "Elginbrod" was a sorrowful wavering of curves and lines; the pen trembled for a moment on the "r" and then stopped altogether, and her head dropped forward on the table while an agony of sobs burst forth.

Then St. John took the paper and wrote below:

"A double cause breeds double hate. The tables are turned—this time it is St. John, the 'mountebank', who avenges Julie Carbonnet."

O, ye unhappy shades of Paolo and Francesca! doomed for all eternity to wander hand in hand through the dreary confines of that inner circle of hell, goaded on by the avenging furies and lashed by the infernal winds! Your fall was inevitable, your fate pitiful, for your plea was love. O, thou matchless Helen! thou didst sin against thy consort, but in sorrow thou canst lift thine eyes to Heaven and cry, "Love did lead me, and I did follow on!" But thou, oh unhappy one, of whom this tale relates, what canst thou say to the thirsting furies who urge thee on and crave thy soul's blood? Thy lips are mute, thou hast no plea, for thou didst not love; but thou wert

the victim of worldly duplicity, and thy relentless tormentor shall be hurled headlong into the gory gulf of Malebolge, while thou shalt stand exalted amidst womankind.

Hark to this story of Mary Elginbrod, but ere opening thy lips to condemn, recall to mind the words on the Mount, and "Judge not that ye be not judged."

CHAPTER XXX.

MY LADY GUILLOTINE IS CHEATED OF HER PREY.

IN a narrow ward of the hospital section of La Roquette, those black and dreary halls wherein lie the broken-down wretches whose meagre brains and bodies refuse to thrive when deprived of their natural elements, light and air, Julie Carbonnet bent over a prisoner's pillow and wiped the drops of fever's agony away. She had relinquished home, position, friends, for this; 'twas all she asked, this privilege of breathing words of hope and courage in a sufferer's ears, although dreary weeks of prison torture had taught her that hope for him was but beyond the grave. Money will procure an access to all earthly habitations; it had gained her entrance there, for a wealthy woman, if she be clad in mercy's guise, may enter the kingdom of heaven itself. And why should curious humanity crane its neck and wonder because one among many millions had chosen to cast aside weeks of worldly pleasure to administer comfort in a felon's cell? Let,

the world crane as it would, Julie Carbonnet offered neither excuse nor explanation.

Since Bourrienne had fallen, weak from mental suffering, upon the floor of his cell, human energy, already severely handicapped by an injured brain, refused to reassert its sway, and he had lain from day to day, staring silently at the four cold and stony walls, whose grim and stolid blackness, though serving to exclude all else of good or evil, failed to shut out the potent horrors of the past, or the no less gruesome ones of the future. There he lay, embargoed by twenty gaping devils, and he must live and face them all. That day, the tenth of his illness, had been a dark and morbid one, and since early morning he had lain like one awaiting the crack of doom.

"Listen, Julie," he said, taking her hand as she stood beside him; "listen while I tell you what this brain has been brooding over all these weary days. Even when man has fallen as low as I have, even when he finds himself upon a par with the lowest of God's creatures, there still exists within him a little spark of something which in his better days he was wont to term as pride. They tell of honor among thieves, Julie; it's an absurd thing to think of, and yet criminal codes from the time of the dark ages have proven that such a thing does in truth exist. Quite as paradoxical is the supposition

of honor or pride in a murderer—do not shudder, Julie, you should be used to the word ere this; but I, at least, can prove its authenticity. Sit beside me here while I tell you in what these dreams of mine consist. I had determined to be game to the end, Julie, until this cursed head of mine gave out and ruined all. I would have died like a Sydney, a Hale, like our own Carton, without a tremor or a fear to the last, and confident that the world would say, 'Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it.' I had determined to let my blood be spilt without a murmur, and to even smile in the upturned faces of the few who would gather there in fiendish curiosity—some perhaps to see how a red-handed villain would draw his last breath; others, the superstitious, to dip their handkerchiefs in the gory flood, for 'tis handed down from imbecile to imbecile, you know, that a human sacrifice upon the altar of the state carries propitious fortune in its wake."

"O, hush, Paul! for God's sake do not speak of these things now. Try to think of something beyond it all," and she bowed her head upon the coverlid—prayers were all that could help him now.

A jailer entered and sought out the twentieth ward. There was a letter for the prisoner Bourrienne, he said. Julie placed the un-

sealed envelope upon the cot before him. How many curious eyes had perused its contents, she wondered, ere it had reached its dreary destination.

"Read it, Julie, my eyes are too bad for this dim light; who can have written to me? I wonder."

Julie Carbonnet lifted the crumpled letter, but hesitated ere she looked within. It was in a woman's hand, his wife's no doubt. What right had she to read words destined for his eyes alone—a wife's pitiful outcry, a woman's heart-broken prayer? Such an act seemed a sacrilege in the girl's eyes.

"Will you not read it, Julie?" asked the sufferer impatiently. "You know my life's story now. Whatever is written there, girl, need be no secret from the world, and words that an accursed jailer may look upon need not be so carefully considered."

She opened the letter and held it toward the light. There were only a few words scrawled across the sheet, but few as they were, they caused Julie Carbonnet's face to grow strangely white. Bourrienne's eyes, dark and piercing, were upon her, and as she raised her own for an instant and met his silent, questioning look, a dark flush succeeded to the pallor.

"What does it say, Julie? Give it me, I will read it myself."

"No, no! my head was dizzy for a moment —I have been standing so long over the cots to-day that my strength has quite failed me. It is from—your wife, Paul," she said.

"Poor little girl! then she knows all, Julie; what does she say?"

"She is well—but—but of course is suffering upon your behalf. She says—she hopes for the best—"

"Poor little one," and the sick man lapsed into a dreamy, sad soliloquy, and Julie Carbonnet tore the paper into tiny shreds and stole quietly away.

Half an hour later when she returned to the prison wards, Bourrienne was lying upon his side, with a quiet, peaceful expression upon his worn and haggard face. He had fallen asleep from mental exhaustion, and even an hour's oblivion is a precious boon to such as he.

When the clamorous gong in the hall without called the tired wretches to their meagre noonday meal, he awoke with a start. For a moment a frightened, pitiful look shone in his wandering eyes, but only for a moment, for Julie was still beside him, and as she pressed his hand gently, the old look came back.

"I feel that sinking again, Julie—this time it is accompanied by strange sensations in the head—help me to rise until it passes. Don't be frightened, dear—it's nothing. I like to

watch the sunlight upon the Rue de la Roquette—ah, it's a beautiful day in old Paris! Would you mind giving me just one kiss, Julie—just one? She would have it so."

Slowly she stooped and pressed her lips to his, but recoiled with a sudden shriek of horror, so icy was their touch. "Paul—Paul—speak to me," she whispered, but the stiffening lips were silent, and the sightless eyes met her terrified ones with a stare of pitiful vacancy.

Bourrienne was dead.

Pale and sad through the streets of Paris goes Mary Elginbrod, a repentant sinner in this world of sin, a lonely unit in the midst of life.

THE END.